VISUAL CULTURE IN EARLY MODERNITY

Images of Sex and Desire in Renaissance Art and Modern Historiography

EDITED BY

Angeliki Pollali and Berthold Hub

An Ashgate Book

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ROUTLEDGE

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An **Ashgate** Book

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"Revolving around notions of Lacanian desire, this provocative volume aims to expand our understanding of the relationship between sexuality and visual culture. The twelve essays assembled here, paying careful attention to historiography, deconstruct a multitude of myths and ideologies in order to advance a more nuanced sense of self and desire. This innovative collection will make a significant contribution to the fields of art history, gender and sexuality studies, and literary theory."

Allison Levy, author of *Sex Acts in Early Modern Italy* (Routledge, 2010)

Studies on gender and sexuality have proliferated in the last decades, covering a wide spectrum of disciplines. This collection of essays offers a metanarrative of sexuality as it has been recently embedded in the art historical discourse of the European Renaissance. It revisits 'canonical' forms of visual culture, such as painting, sculpture and a number of emblematic manuscripts. The contributors focus on one image—either actual or thematic—and examine it against its historiographic assumptions. Through the use of interdisciplinary approaches, the essays propose to unmask the ideology(ies) of representation of sexuality and suggest a richer image of the ever-shifting identities of gender. The collection focuses on the Italian Renaissance, but also includes case studies from Germany and France.

Angeliki Pollali is Associate Professor and Program Coordinator of Art History at Deree—The American College of Greece.

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Katherine Crawford is Professor of History at Vanderbilt University. She is interested in the ways that gender informs sexual practice, ideology and identity, both in normative and nonnormative formations. Her books include *Perilous Performances: Gender and Regency in Early Modern France* (Harvard University Press, 2004), *European Sexualities, 1400–1800* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), and *The Sexual Culture of the French Renaissance* (Cambridge University Press, 2010). Her current project examines the cultural questions around gender, sexuality and embodiment raised by castrated men in early modern Europe.

Sabine Engel is an independent scholar. She is currently working as a lecturer at the Gemäldegalerie, Kupferstichkabinett and Bode-Museum,

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Nancy M. Frelick is Associate Professor of French at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. She is the author of *Délie as Other: Toward a Poetics of Desire in Scève's* Délie (French Forum, 1994), as well as articles on French Renaissance poetry and prose, including works attributed to women (Louise Labé, Marguerite de Navarre, Marie de Gournay, Hélisenne de Crenne, and Jeanne Flore) and men (Maurice Scève, Michel de Montaigne, François Rabelais). Her current projects explore mirror imagery and discourses of desire in Early Modern texts and visual culture. She recently edited a collective volume on *The Mirror in Medieval and Early Modern Culture: Specular Reflections* (Brepols, 2016) and is now completing a book manuscript entitled *Mirrors of Desire.*

Linda C. Hults received her BA from Indiana University in Bloomington, majoring in art history and comparative religion. She did graduate work in art history at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, earning a Ph.D in 1978 with a dissertation on Hans Baldung Grien. She taught at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, the University of Tulsa and The College of Wooster, where she also taught in the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program. Her publications include *The Print in the Western World: An Introductory History* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1996); *The Witch as Muse: Art, Gender, and Power in Early Modern Europe* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); and articles focusing on gender issues in early modern art. She lives in Wooster with her husband, Bill Munger, and continues her art-historical research and writing, along with working part time in furniture sales and design.

Liliana Leopardi earned an MA in clinical psychology from the California Graduate Institute in 1992 and an MA and Ph.D in art history from the

Institute of Fine Arts, New York University in 2000 and 2007, respectively. She is an assistant professor of art history at Hobart and William Smith Colleges and her current research focuses on the intersection of magic and material culture in the Early Modern period in Italy. Her most recent publications on the subject have focused specifically on Camillo Leonardi's *Speculum Lapidum* and the astrological magic motives of ancient intaglios collected in the Early Modern period, as well as addressing the embodied qualities of lapidary magic. She also works on the construction of gender and sexuality in the Renaissance and on fetishism and the relationship between word and image.

Robin O'Bryan received her Ph.D from the University of Virginia and teaches art history at Messiah College. Apart from her interest in witchcraft, her research focus is on issues related to the Italian Renaissance subculture, particularly dwarfs and their representation in period imagery. Her articles appear in journals including *Preternature, Source, The Medal, SECAC Review,* and a forthcoming essay in *Art Bulletin.* She is currently preparing an edited volume on games in Early Modern art and literature for Medieval Institute Publications, and a book-length study on dwarfs in Italian Renaissance art and culture.

Yvonne Owens is a past Research Fellow at the University College of London, and she currently teaches art history, philosophy of art, and critical studies at the Victoria College of Art, Victoria, BC. She was awarded a Marie Curie Ph.D. Fellowship in 2005 for her interdisciplinary dissertation on Renaissance portrayals of women in art and sixteenth-century Witch Hunt discourses. Her publications to date have mainly focused on representations of women and the gendering of evil 'defect' in classical humanist discourses, cross-referencing these figures to historical art, theology, literature, and the sciences. She also writes art and cultural criticism, exploring contemporary posthumanist discourses in art, literature and new media.

Angeliki Pollali is Associate Professor of art history at Deree—The American College of Greece. She received her Ph.D in art history and theory from the University of Essex, UK. She has published on

Renaissance architectural theory and together with Berthold Hub she has edited the anthology *Reconstructing Francesco di Giorgio Architect* (Peter Lang, 2011). Her research interests include architectural history and theory of the Italian Renaissance; gender studies; historiography and methodology of art history.

François Quiviger is a fellow of the Warburg Institute (University of London). His research centers on Early Modern European cultural history and focuses on ideas and beliefs about images and representation. His book, *The Sensory World of Italian Renaissance Art* (London, Reaktion 2010), analyzes representations of nonvisual sensations in Early Modern art and their relation to ancient and modern theories of cognition. His current project explores the parallel histories of wine and Bacchic mythologies.

Romana Sammern (Filzmoser) is Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the department of art history, University of Salzburg. Her research interests include Early Modern visual culture; the materiality of artworks; image theories and art theory; iconology of cosmetics; clothes and cloth. She received her Ph.D from Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin on images of prostitutes in English seventeenth- and eighteenth-century print culture (*Hurenbilder. Ein Motiv in der Druckgrafik des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts,* Böhlau 2014). She has published on the art history of physical beauty, Richard Haydocke and the relations of cosmetics, art, and medicine in seventeenth-century England; Abraham Bosse and his writings on art; and eighteenth-century prints in Austria.

Tatiana C. String is Associate Professor of Art History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is the author of *Art and Communication in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Ashgate: 2008) and co-editor of *Tudorism: Historical Imagination and the Appropriation of the Sixteenth Century,* Proceedings of the British Academy (Oxford University Press: 2011), as well as numerous articles and chapters on English art in the sixteenth century. Her current research focuses on masculinity and the male body in Renaissance art.

Introduction

Renaissance Sexuality and Myth Making

Angeliki Pollali

> Desire, a function central to all human experience, is the desire for nothing nameable. And at the same time this desire lies at the origin of every variety of animation. If being were only what it is, there wouldn't even be room to talk about it. Being comes into existence as an exact function of this lack. Being attains a sense of self in relation to being as a function of this lack, in the experience of desire.[1]
>
> —Jacques Lacan

The study of the Renaissance is fraught with myth, possibly more so than other periods and possibly because it was one of the first periods to receive utmost attention in terms of both historical and art historical investigation. Or is this *my* myth as a Renaissance art historian? It is another common theme in Renaissance historiography that many of these myths originated in the publication by Jacob Burckhardt *The Civilization of Renaissance Italy* (1860). If we were to look for certitudes in Renaissance myths and their genealogies, one claim would qualify as a privileged signifier: "To understand the higher forms of social intercourse at this period we must keep before our minds the fact that women stood on a footing of perfect equality with men."[2] It constitutes the opening statement of the brief chapter on "The Position of Women" in Burckhardt's otherwise extensive book on the Italian Renaissance. A century passed until Linda Nochlin in 1971 asked her polemical question: "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?"[3] Acknowledged as a foundational text for gender studies in art history, Nochlin's essay called for a paradigm shift in the discipline and spurred a sustained scholarly interest in women artists. It was only a few years later, in 1977, that another female art historian asked a similar question, addressing it more specifically to the Early Modern period: "Did Women have a Renaissance?"[4] Joan Kelly-Gadol identified the beginning of female subordination and thus the "modern relation of the sexes"[5] in the

Renaissance, challenging the view of "perfect equality" advocated by Jacob Burckhardt.[6]

One of the first endeavors to tackle Kelly's question was the feminist collection of essays *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe* (1986).[7] It examined the role(s) and position(s) of women through a series of texts and images from Renaissance Europe, including Italy, France, Germany and England, with an emphasis on English literary texts. The book is organized around the themes of patriarchy and the marginalization of women. The critical approaches used, Marxism, psychoanalysis and deconstruction, were the innovative/polemical tools of feminist discourse at the time. One of the earliest discussions of gender (rather than 'women') grew out of a symposium held at Cornell University in 1988 and refers specifically to the Italian Renaissance. *Refiguring Woman: Perspectives on Gender and the Italian Renaissance* (1991) explores humanist thought, literary texts, visual arts and sociopolitical conditions aiming to "expand the analysis of gender beyond the empirical study of women."[8] The volume was one of the first attempts to address the danger of ghettoization inherent in women's studies. While its third section questions the canon by recovering marginalized texts, other essays reconsider the hermeneutic model of gender and ideologies of female oppression. Finally, one of the first volumes to deal exclusively with women and visual culture appeared in 1997 and also focused on Italy: *Picturing Women in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*.[9] The anthology examined not only female representations in art, but also the role of women as art makers, patrons and audience.

Sexual difference and sexuality have traditionally constituted an integral component of feminist and gender studies. In recent years, however, the history of sexuality has been carving its own domain in scholarship. Studies have proliferated, ranging from broad surveys of Western culture to investigations of specific times and places.[10] A rather comprehensive chronological treatment of sexuality appeared in 2011 in a six-volume series.[11] Sexuality is examined across time, from antiquity through to the twentieth century, under the specific headings of heterosexuality; homosexuality; sexual variations; religion and the law; medicine and disease; popular beliefs and culture; prostitution and erotica. While these categories reflect our current cultural ideologies of sex and gender, the essays attempt an historical understanding of sexuality. In the introduction

to the volume on the Renaissance, edited by Bette Talvacchia, the reader finds a useful definition of biological sexuality in the Renaissance, where male/female is not presented as a binary opposition but rather as a spectrum of possibilities between the two poles.[12] Ann Rosalind Jones in the same volume argues that 'heterosexuality' as we intend it today did not exist in the Renaissance either as a biological construct or as a cultural one.[13] Independently of the insights gained in cultural history, current categories of sexuality seem to persist in scholarship, as if to render explicit, or to serve as a reminder of, our own historical position and the distorted lens that it provides. In *A Companion to Renaissance and Baroque Art* (2013), James Saslow provides a concise survey on sexuality and the visual arts.[14] In this most recent overview titled "The Desiring Eye: Gender, Sexuality, and the Visual Arts," he organizes his discussion of "art with sexual themes"[15] around four types of audience: 'heterosexual male ideal,' 'heterosexual woman,' 'homosexual male' and 'lesbian women.'

Another emerging field explores specifically the relationship between sexuality and visual culture. In the case of the Renaissance, the following threads can be discerned.[16] Interdisciplinary approaches have been deployed to examine material culture broadly defined: prints, letters, majolica, musical instruments, novels, legislative texts. Sexuality is thus explored and redefined through the period's cultural products. Another strand takes the approach of examining sexuality specifically in relation to Early Modern erotic visual culture, including traditional visual practices, literary texts, and social practices. Specific aspects of sexuality, such as sodomy and cuckoldry, have also been examined in relation to their general cultural context and visual culture in particular.[17] Following Leo Steinberg's pioneering study on the sexuality of Christ,[18] the history of sexuality in Renaissance Europe has been further explored through works of art whose sexual meaning has been ignored so far.[19] Widening the discussion of sexuality, the intersection of art and love in the Italian Renaissance has also been examined, with love broadly defined as eros, passion and friendship.[20]

The present anthology reflects upon, expands, deploys and questions the above discussion. It aims to propose a metanarrative of Renaissance sexuality. It advances the discussion of gender identities and sexualities in the Early Modern period, while attempting to expose the mechanisms of myth making inherent in the process. The awareness of preconceived or received notions, as well as new assumptions, becomes a significant part of

the project. Concurrently, the anthology addresses the questions of whether the recently expanded corpus of knowledge on gender and sexuality has transformed the way we 'see' art and in what ways. To this end, it further explores the way in which this corpus has affected current art historical discourse. To achieve these goals the volume moves away from marginalization and ruptures and it returns to 'canonical' art history. It revisits canonical forms of visual culture, such as painting and sculpture and a number of emblematic manuscripts. It focuses on the Italian Renaissance, while it includes case studies from Germany and France. Scholars primarily trained in art history, but also history and literary criticism, focus on one image—either actual or thematic. Additionally, a number of the works examined in the anthology enjoy an iconic status in the art historical canon. Finally, historiographical considerations are used as a point of departure to revisit the works under consideration. A dialogue is thus established between past and present, which no longer allows for a linear direction of interpretation of art in terms of gender and sexuality. 'Erotic' content is amplified or underscored, depending not only on the work itself but also its historiographical context. The volume not only includes cases of overseen sexuality (both female and male) and ushers in works in the domain of gender studies, but also engages with the limitations of such approaches.

Even though the essays address established categories: male/female sexuality, 'homosexuality,' their stereotypical portrayals and their 'perverse' nuances, such as fetishism, the volume is not structured around them. Attempting to be true to their objective of a metanarrative of Renaissance sexuality, the editors opted for a broader spectrum. The volume is structured around a broadly defined notion of Lacanian desire: "Being attains a sense of self . . . *in*[21] the experience of desire."[22] The three sections of the volume invite the reader to partake in desire in distinct ways: through its politics, its mechanisms of actualization, and its polysemy, in the hope of discovering a *sense* of a Renaissance self.

The first section, "The Politics of Desire: Stereotypes and Ambiguity of Gender Identity," considers sexuality in Early Modern Europe in relation to gender identity. Masculinity, femininity and sexual excess are examined and questioned through their stereotypes. The authors argue that gender identity and sexuality serve the means of political, religious and artistic propaganda.

The *politics* of desire are thus exposed, pointing to the ambiguities of gender representation, gender roles and identity itself.

Linda Hults offers a penetrating view of masculinity in the Early Modern period through a discussion of 'all about the male': the depiction of the male body, its reception by a male audience and the enhancement of the status of the male patron. She opens the anthology with a work which would not normally be considered a typical gender case study. Scholarship on Dürer's *Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand Christians* (1508) has focused, in fact, on iconographic and political interpretations. Hults argues that the male body becomes an instrument of piety which is both gendered and politicized. The painting is populated by a multitude of male bodies entirely or partially naked, which are represented wounded or tortured, thus challenging traditional ideas of masculinity. Hults deploys Early Modern ideas about manhood but she draws the theoretical tools of her discussion from a diverse range of discourses: religious, literary and film studies. The multilayered gendered interpretation thus generated is used to enhance both the political and religious significance of the painting. Situating the work in the historical setting of the Ottoman threat from the East, Hults observes that the Turks are portrayed in a stereotypical manner of excess in terms of violent and sexual behavior. The painting becomes an exhortation to morality and chastity for its German audience, while gender ambiguity is used by Dürer to enforce masculinity in terms of gender identity.

A politicized perception of gender is deployed by Peter Bell. He examines the central portal of the church of St. Peter's, the most iconic entry into Western Christendom, drawing our attention to a singular homoerotic interlude. Commissioned by Pope Eugene IV and created by Filarete between 1433 and 1445, the doors include the depiction of the ecumenical councils of Ferrara and Florence—actual historical events related to Eugene's pontificate. In the panel depicting the departure of the orthodox Greeks after the Council, there exists a detail which comes as a surprise to the modern viewer. Three men are standing behind the Byzantine emperor; the middle one is touching the man in front of him underneath the latter's garment. How is one to account for this 'homoerotic' instance in a portal of such religious significance? Bell reads closely text and image: the sources related to the ecumenical council and the corresponding scenes on the doors. He argues that historical accuracy is manipulated to enforce a hierarchy within Christianity and to advocate the

primacy of the Pope. Bell deliberately leaves the question open of whether this homoerotic instance represented a choice on the part of the patron or the artist. He rather weaves 'homoeroticism' with Filarete's intention to impart 'hilaritas' in his depictions on the portal, as specified by the relative inscription on the interior of the doors. Bell further relates this iconographic detail to the stereotypical perception of the ancient Greeks, and thus the Byzantines, as homosexuals. A hidden detail for the educated viewer, the 'homoerotic interlude' would have signified the primacy of Catholic customs and behavior over those of the Orthodox Greeks. Explicit sexual behavior would have thus served both ends: the 'playfulness' intended by the artist and the religious propaganda desired by the Pope.

The essay by Robin O'Bryan returns to gender ambiguity and the manner in which sexuality is put at the service of religious propaganda. She examines Filippino Lippi's vault fresco of Adam in Filippo Strozzi's burial chapel in Santa Maria Novella in Florence. She provides an interpretation of the fresco's unique iconography focusing not only on the biblical narrative but also on the sexual overtones of the painting. Adam is wearing an animal skin given to him by God after the Fall. He holds a young boy, while he engages in an 'ocular intercourse' with a female serpent enfolded on a tree trunk. O'Bryan suggests that the iconography conflates the two moments, before and after the Fall, and she identifies the serpent as Lilith, the female demon of Jewish legend. Adam's first wife, Lilith was thought to copulate with men in their sleep and to kill male children. The Dominican church of Santa Maria Novella would have welcomed the fresco as a moral lesson against sexual excess for both male and female viewers. O'Bryan further contends that the fresco served as a warning against sodomy and thus as an exhortation to chastity for the Dominican monks. Two points are instrumental for her argument: the relationship of the painting to the contemporaneous Dominican treatise on witchcraft, *Malleus Maleficarum*, and the reversal of stereotypical gender roles: Adam is represented seated, flaccid and passive, while the female serpent is erect, phallic and active.

Almost functioning as a warning to the previous interventions, the last essay of this section emphasizes gender ambiguity and the inability to fix identity. Nancy Frelick discusses Maurice Scève's *Délie, objct de plus haulte vertu* (1544), a distinct specimen among Early Modern books. While similar in format to emblem books, the *Délie* differs considerably from them. The fifty woodcut figures are inserted among the four hundred and

fifty love poems, instead of being associated to individual sets of moralizing verses. Scholars have provided contrasting views regarding the relationship of text to image: one illustrating the other or even being totally unrelated. Frelick focuses on the seventh emblem and accompanying poem (Dizain 60) to further investigate this relationship. The image depicts a youth by a pond looking at himself in the water, pointing to the identification of the figure as Narcissus. The poem makes no mention of Narcissus, nor do the verses directly reflect the myth. Image and text are to be 'read' together to establish the identity of the figure but once identification has been achieved, a destabilized Narcissus emerges. The poem describes a person consumed by love but who, at the same time, does not love himself—resembling thus the figure of Echo. Frelick provides a Lacanian reading of the Ovidian myth emphasizing the instability of gender roles and identities, which is 'mirrored' in Scève's image. Emblem Seven becomes an emblem of reversal, ambiguity and destabilization of gender identities.

Sabine Engel opens the second section of this volume—"Mechanisms for Actualizing Desire: From Seduction to *Post-Coital Man*" —with an essay which revolves around lack. She explores the iconography of what was considered to be the greatest vice in Renaissance society: adultery. In emblem books she identifies the most relevant source for her investigation, as they consist of both text and image and they possess a moralizing function. She undertakes a comprehensive study of Renaissance emblem books focusing on the sixteenth century, concluding that adultery was rarely represented and its iconography is not easily discernible without the aid of written text. Its imagery is diverse and it is dominated by the *absence* of women. She identifies the earliest depiction of adultery in Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff* (1494), a text closely related to emblem books. Adultery is linked to prostitution and the female character is likened to cats, whose lust cannot be easily satiated. Subsequently, she turns to the most well-known emblem book, Alciato's *Emblematum Liber* (1531), translated into several languages and published in numerous editions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the Venetian edition of the book (1546), she identifies two emblems related to adultery examined here for the first time. The first associates adultery with the cuckoo, which lays its eggs in the nests of other birds. The second emblem is associated with incest. Surprisingly, the offense is compared to the act of defecating in a food

vessel, while the deed itself is performed by a Jew and not a woman. Adultery is connected more consistently with women in the second half of sixteenth century, yet their absence seems to persist and to *speak* of their presence.

The absence of a concrete iconography of adultery would seem to privilege phantasy as a mechanism of desire between subject and object. Lacan emphasizes lack at both ends: phantasy is the *mise en scène*, where the 'eclipse of the subject' encounters the lost object of desire. Desire is constantly displaced from one object to another, as no single object can satisfy it. Romana Sammern tackles such a displacement with regard to creativity. She engages in a novel reading of emblem 29 from *Amorum Emblemata* by Otto Van Veen. The verses of the emblem concern seduction, connecting it to the bear and her newly born; the illustration of the emblem depicts a cupid watching a bear licking its cub. Sammern interprets the emblem in the context of sixteenth-century writings on art and seventeenth-century obscene literature. The topos of the she-bear and her young is found in Pliny's *Natural History* and refers to the bear giving shape to a lump of flesh. In sixteenth-century Italy, the topos was used not only in relation to artistic creativity but also in connection with love imagery. Sammern takes the intriguing step of further relating Van Veen's emblem to *The Whore's Rhetoric* (1642) by Ferrante Pallavicino, as the author inventively draws a parallel between the 'art' of prostitution and the art of rhetoric. Sammern thus links sexuality and creativity, furthering the relative scholarly discussion of how these notions intertwined in the Early Modern period. Her enhanced reading of Van Veen's emblem elucidates the desire of the (M)other, the primordial Other, for her child, or, in sixteenth century cultural terms, the interplay of nurturing and seduction.

The following essay puts forth a case of actualization of sexual appetite. Tatiana String explores the representation of the male body in images related to the subject of the 'Power of Women'. Scholarly discussion has identified in the 'Power of Women' the topos of reversed gender roles, which appeared in the Middle Ages and continued through the sixteenth century. String focuses on the Judith theme and in particular on Johannes Ladenspelder's image of *Judith and Holofernes* (1554), while also examining other sixteenth-century Northern and Italian examples. String points out that attention has focused on Judith, while the figure of Holofernes has been overlooked by art historians—an interesting case of

marginalization of the male figure. She identifies in these works a novel type of iconography for the nude male body and she argues that it refers to the 'post-coital man'. Holofernes is not represented *erect*, but lying down. His body is flaccid, lifeless, and his genitalia are either shown or suggested. The nakedness of Judith, evidently absent in the Bible, becomes an 'index' of coitus, visually supported by the prominence of the bed and its disheveled state. Sex and death are thus emphatically conflated in the postcoital state of *la petite mort*. Early modern male viewers would have been reminded of the mortal dangers of lust, while contemporaneous male viewers would note the structural relation of desire to death.

Angeliki Pollali closes this section of the book with an essay that moves beyond sexual satisfaction and points to the unattainability of the satiation of desire. She examines another instance of the representation of the Judith theme. Donatello's bronze sculptural group *Judith and Holofernes* has received numerous readings based on allegorical, political and gendered interpretations. Judith has emerged as a symbol of humility, chastity, justice. The unique iconography of the group has comparatively received less attention. Judith, standing *on* Holofernes, has conferred the first blow and is about to strike the second fatal one. Her left foot rests on Holofernes' hand, while her right foot is stepping on his groin. Pollali considers Donatello's singular iconographic choices and focuses on the relationship of the statue to the biblical narrative. She draws on psychoanalytic theory and the scholarly literature of the story of Judith, informed by feminism and psychoanalysis. She examines readings of the 'text' in parallel with readings of the 'image' in an attempt to generate meaning at the locus where these discourses diverge or interrelate. It emerges that Donatello's statue constitutes a rupture with the biblical story, while simultaneously bearing a close structural relation with the narrative. Pollali argues that rather than corresponding to a Freudian castration, the act of decapitation in Donatello's *Judith and Holofernes* denotes a Lacanian absence of satisfaction of desire.

The essays in the final section of the book, "Beyond the 'pleasure principle' or the polysemy of desire," offer the *promise* of pleasure. The authors engage with pleasure beyond or after 'meaning' and reveal the polysemy of desire. Leopardi associates desire with violence and death. Through her analysis, she makes the unattainable desire of her main character 'attainable' to her reader. Quiviger decontextualizes an icon of

Renaissance contextualization and proposes instead a sensory experience of the work based on pleasure. Yvonne Owens contextualizes a work which has been primarily interpreted as a carrier of erotic desire. She moves beyond the erotic content to detect pleasure in the intricacy of meaning which the work encapsulated for its audience. Crawford offers a metanarrative of scholarly discussion, disclosing to the reader the mechanism of deriving pleasure through the proliferation of meaning itself.

Liliana Leopardi examines Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499) and addresses an understudied, yet overriding, element of the text: the explicit violence which characterizes both text and image in Book II. While the frustrated desire of Poliphilo, the book's protagonist, has been identified in scholarly discussion as a main feature of Book I, no attempt has been made to relate it to the violence of the second book. As a result, the two volumes appear to be disconnected in terms of both form and content of the narrative. Deploying primarily a psychoanalytic approach, Leopardi argues that fetishist desire represents the key element in understanding the unity of the books. She contextualizes fetishism through the intricate weaving of psychoanalytic and humanistic discourse. Using a post-Freudian definition of fetishism, Leopardi identifies in the frustrated desire, inherent in Collona's text, a defensive mechanism against self-destruction and death. As part of her analysis, she proposes that architecture, the dismembered ancient ruin, becomes the perfect metaphor for the humanist ideal of a woman who is desired but who never desires herself. The woman's dismembered body, Poliphilo's beloved Polia in this case, becomes a signifier of the fetishist desire. Leopardi concludes that the lustful desire of Book I leads to death in Book II. Desire in *Hypnerotomachia* consists of the eros of death and thus the first book functions as the *involucrum tegumentum* of Book II.

Intriguingly François Quiviger sets the discussion of an icon of Italian Renaissance mythological painting in the context of religious representation. His analysis of Titian's *Bacchanal of the Andrians* chooses to focus not on the story, the narrative, but on the depiction of what he designates as the story's key element, the human body. The preoccupation of Renaissance artists with the human body is a well-known topos traditionally related to 'naturalism' and the 'rediscovery' of antiquity. Quiviger moves back in time only to remind us that Renaissance viewers had been trained to view the 'body' through religious representations and

more specifically the depiction of the humanity of Christ. His essay marks a welcome departure from iconography/iconology and is informed instead by premises related to neuroarthistory and cultural anthropology. He argues that 'empathy'—"personally experiencing how someone else feels" —previously deployed to convey the suffering of Christ, is now utilized by Titian as a mechanism to trigger desire. In his review of the painting's historiography, Quiviger emphasizes the painting's resistance to 'textualizations' and defines his own enterprise as a journey through the senses rather than a search for 'meaning.' Desirably he relates the attitudes and positions of the painting's figures to the various sensations which would have been associated with a bacchanal. The nude sleeping figure dominating the foreground becomes the main carrier of early modern masculine desire and Titian's painting a foundational text of Western pornography.

Yvonne Owens identifies in Hans Baldung Grien's *The Witch and the Dragon* (1515) a singular work due to its unique rendering of subject matter and consequent 'absence' from historiography. A young nude woman engages in an intimate interaction with an animal identified as a dragon: a flowing stream connects the female vagina with the mouth of the monstrous creature, while the two 'figures' engage in an interlocking gaze. Expanding the erotic/pornographic significance of the image, Owens identifies a coalescence of different discourses related to the sixteenth-century theological and medical conception of Woman as the dangerous 'Other.' Owens connects sixteenth-century texts on witchcraft with theories on feminine menstruation. She also turns to Paracelsus' discussion of the basilisk and the trope of the 'poison maiden'—woman who feeds on venom —prominent in contemporaneous folkloric and literary texts. She interprets the 'dragon' as a basilisk and concludes that the monster not only interacts, but ultimately stands for the beautiful young maiden. The image was devised to convey an opposition of desirability and abjection—forbidden desire—subscribing to a new genre of 'classically inspired religious pornography.' The educated elite to whom the drawing was addressed would have delved in the polysemous misogynism present in contemporaneous religious, literary and 'scientific' discourses, eliciting further pleasure from 'reading' and not simply gazing at the image.

Katherine Crawford directs our attention to a work that is not simply well known but that seems to have become an icon of twenty-first-century

popular culture. *Gabrielle d' Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs* (1594?) appears, however, to have shared aspects of popular culture from the very moment of its inception. Even though the Louvre version is thought to be the 'original,' the work survives in several copies and several versions. It is not signed and the artist(s) remains unknown. Uncertainty characterizes everything else about the painting: the identity of the portrayed figures as well as their actions. Crawford engages in a metareading of every aspect of scholarship concerning the work: the identity of the figures, their attributes, the discussion of subject matter and the painting's various interpretations. Her method is deconstructive and her aim is ultimately to reveal the "pleasure of proliferation of meaning." Her intention to expose 'gaps' in meaning is exemplified in her discussion of the painting's interpretations. Feminist readings have considered the work a typical example of lesbian invisibility; the existence of heteronormative and lesbian readings align it with queer aesthetics, while Crawford 'concludes' that in the Renaissance, the painting would have possibly allowed for both heterosexual and female homoerotic desire. Her analysis becomes a tool that lays bare the generative principle of pleasure for her reader. For instance, she recounts an interpretation of the painting as an allegorical satire of the frivolity of Henri IV, only to share with the reader the 'pleasure' of deconstructing it. Crawford makes sexuality and desire an integral part of her essay; the pleasure of proliferating criticism becomes the pleasure of the reader as well. Her text becomes a carrier of desire, a desire whose object is constantly deferred, and her undertaking an index of the metonymy of desire.

In many ways this volume positions in a distant past Joan Kelly-Gadol's question of whether women had a Renaissance. At the same time it highlights an important historiographical continuity: sexuality(ies) remains a key concept in understanding the ever-shifting identities of gender. Through the deconstruction of historiographical assumptions, the essays have attempted to unmask the ideologies of sexuality and thus further enhance the notion of gender identity in the Early Modern period, suggesting a richer 'image' of its changing appearances. The binary oppositions of male/female, masculinity/femininity, heterosexuality/homoeroticism, together with the primary binary couple of gender/sexuality, have been either reinforced, attenuated or confounded—as if to substantiate Lacan's notion of a 'sense of self,' and as if to evidence that it is only a 'sense of self' that we can hope to glimpse while

‘constructing’ our own Renaissance myth, in our attempt to deconstruct it. This *sense*, by its very essence of being a sense, may concern any *self*—any identity: social, political, ideological, sexual. It is in the experience of *desire* that they all conflate, a ‘desire for nothing nameable.’

Notes

1 Lacan (1991b, 223–4).
2 Burckhardt (1958, 389).
3 Nochlin (1971).
4 Kelly-Gadol (1987).
5 Kelly-Gadol (1987, 197).
6 On the survival of Burckhardt’s view, see Kelly-Gadol (1987, 197, note 1).
7 Ferguson *et al.* (1986).
8 Migiel and Schiesari (1991, 13).
9 Johnson and Matthews-Grieco (1997).
10 See for instance Crawford (2010) and Simons (2011).
11 Peakman (2011).
12 Talvacchia (2011).
13 Jones (2011).
14 Saslow (2013).
15 Saslow (2013, 128).
16 See indicatively Levy (2010) and Matthews-Grieco (2010).
17 Mills (2015) focuses on sodomy in the Middle Ages, whereas Matthews-Grieco (2014) focuses on cuckoldry and adultery in Early Modern Europe.
18 Steinberg (1983).
19 Wolfthal (2010). For key sources in the extensive bibliography related generally to art and gender from the 1970s onwards, see Saslow (2013, 144, note 4).
20 Kohl *et al.* (2014).
21 My emphasis.
22 Lacan (1991b, 224).

Part I

The Politics of Desire

Stereotypes and Ambiguity of Gender Identity

1 Body Language in Dürer's *Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand Christians*

Linda C. Hults

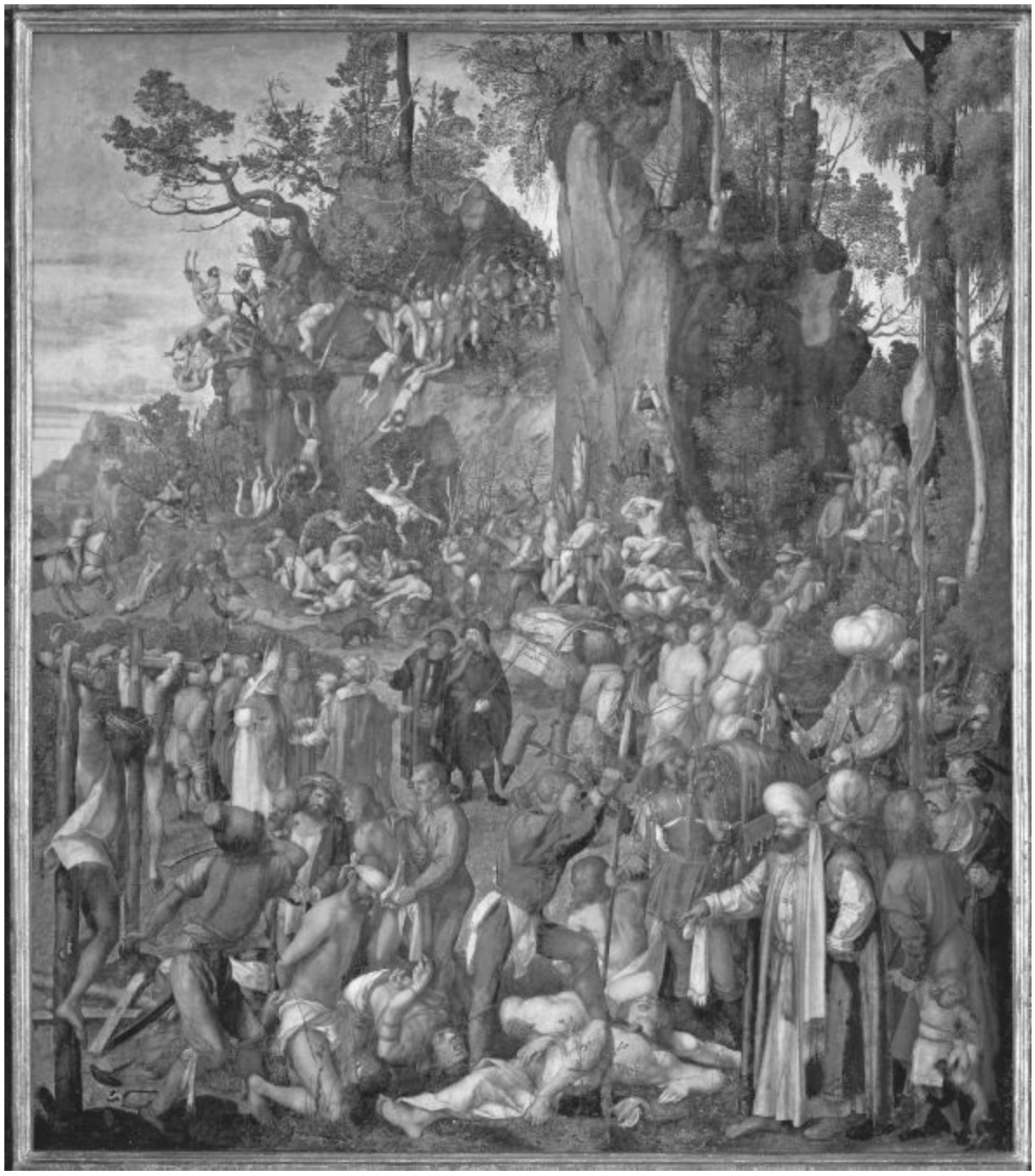

Figure 1.1 Albrecht Dürer, *The Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand Christians*, 1508. Oil on panel, transferred to canvas, 99 × 87 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 835.

Photo: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, New York.

> What space is left for the female martyr, when male and female have already been appropriated?
>
> —Catherine Conybeare.[1]

Dürer and Christian Masculinity

Albrecht Dürer depicted male bodies with an intense engagement and a formal and iconographic variety not paralleled in his female figures.[2] From his self–portraits and male portraits, to the heroic, nude Apollos and Adams in his early work, to the nuanced figure of Christ in his graphic Passions, published in 1511–12, to the *Four Holy Men* (1526, Alte Pinakothek, Munich), in which physical bodies are subsumed under the abstract power of the Word, Dürer sustained a dialogue with the male body that affirms his artistic and personal investment in its potential to convey meaning. Such a large body of work on male bodies begs consideration in terms of masculinity.

Early modern ideas about manhood were drawn from many discourses. Theories of human physiology from the Hippocratic writers, Aristotle and Galen postulated a cool, moist female body and a superior hotter, drier male body that corresponded to the presumed weakness and inwardness of women and the greater energy and extroversion of men, whether in sexual intercourse or intellectual and public achievements. Similarly, ancient theories of human generation confined the female role entirely or largely to material sustenance, in contrast to the male's contribution of spirit.[3] Although these ideas from antiquity were ubiquitous in Early Modern Europe, they were filtered through Christian ideals of masculinity, grounded in a paradoxical man/God whose terrible suffering and ignoble death epitomized the passivity usually attributed to women, while simultaneously evoking the taciturn, heroic endurance touted by the ancient Stoics. Christ was and remains an extremely complicated masculine model. In his life and ministry, he subverted certain Jewish and Roman ideals of manhood (e.g. his rejection of marriage and family) while exemplifying others (e.g. his assumption of an authoritative, public role).[4] As a rabbi and minister, Jesus modeled reason and moderation—key markers of ideal masculinity in early modern Europe.[5] However, as the apocalyptic Lamb/Son of Man, he was an imperialistic conqueror presiding over a hyperbolic, retributory violence surpassing the bloody spectacles of the Roman arena.[6]

Dürer envisioned these contradictory ideas of Christian masculinity in his art. In this essay, I focus on his *Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand Christians* (1508, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), a work comprised solely of male bodies (Figure 1.1). It exemplifies late medieval piety in its fostering

of saint and relic worship and the imitation of Christ. The martyrs reenact Christ's Passion by suffering their own, and Dürer and his contemporaries witness that suffering, all to gain access to the salvific power of the body of Christ. Not only was that access increasingly contested within Christendom in the period before the Reformation, but Christendom itself was also confronted by an outside enemy: the Ottoman Turks, who shared with Christians and Jews an eschatological preoccupation with a violent end time.[7] In Dürer's painting, male bodies are the expressive vehicles for this highly gendered and politicized piety.

The Iconography and Context of the Painting

Frederick the Wise of Saxony commissioned the painting to venerate the relics of the ten thousand martyrs: symbols of Saxon piety and power enshrined resplendently in his castle church and documented in 1508 in a speech by Christoph Scheurl, a Nuremberg lawyer and Dürer's friend, and Lucas Cranach the Elder's woodcut guide to the Wittenberg relics (1509). The legend of the martyrs originated in the twelfth century and was recounted with variations in late fifteenth-century texts such as the *Heiligenleben* (Augsburg, 1472), the *Lübecker Passional* (c. 1480), the *Bamberg Breviary* used in Nuremberg Churches (1484), the *Nuremberg Passional*, published by Dürer's godfather Anton Koberger in 1488 and Hartmann Schedel's *Nuremberg Chronicle* (1493), illustrated with woodcuts by Michael Wolgemut and workshop, where Dürer was apprenticed.[8] The tale begins with nine thousand of Hadrian's soldiers, fighting rebels in the Euphrates region, converting to Christianity, and achieving victory with the help of an angel, who then led them to be baptized on Mount Ararat. Despite the soldiers' victory on Rome's behalf, a tribunal of Hadrian's allies ordered that they be brutally tortured until they recanted their faith. In their refusal, the soldiers became surrogates for the suffering Christ, inspiring a thousand additional men to join them; afterwards, all were martyred. The baptism of the soldiers on Mount Ararat, where Noah's ark rested, linked the Old Testament covenant to Christ's salvific suffering, its reenactment by the martyrs, and further to European Christians, descendants of Noah's son Japheth.[9]

Dürer had depicted this legend in an earlier woodcut (*c.* 1496, Figure 1.2), but he made significant changes in the painted version. Since a particle

of Christ's Crown of Thorns, given by Louis VI of France to Rudolf I of Saxony, was the most treasured Saxon relic, Dürer featured thorny crowns prominently in the painting. Frederick's collection also included relic particles of the martyrs' military leader, St. Achatius, and St. Hermolaus, a bishop mentioned in the *Bamberg Breviary* account who had been assimilated, like other bishops, into the original legend as the baptizer of the martyrs prior to their deaths.[10] In the woodcut, Dürer included Hadrian as a king in the left foreground and Achatius as the central Christlike figure tied to a tree. Bishop Hermolaus (if he can indeed be identified) has his eyes bored out at the right. In the painting, Dürer omitted Hadrian and the blinding of the bishop, who now appears in the left middle ground being confronted by his persecutors. Beneath him is Achatius, wearing a thorny crown and green robe, and now looking even more like Christ. Displacing the central group of martyrs in the woodcut are full-length portraits of the artist and German poet laureate Conrad Celtis, first identified by Erwin Panofsky.[11]

The painting constantly evokes Christ's Passion with the procession toward impalement on the right, visual echoes of Christ being mocked and beaten, the Christlike figure of Achatius, two crucifixions at the left and the presence of torturers throughout. Christ's bodily suffering is multiplied and diffused into the exposed, vulnerable bodies of the martyrs, and the cruelly ingenious variety of torments suggests the Roman arena. The martial and public, spectacular nature of their martyrdom—more characteristic of male saints—would seem to make them particularly appealing objects of devotion for Christian men.[12] Indeed, John Frederick I, son of John the Steadfast, Frederick the Wise's brother and co-regent, took the painting to Brussels when he was imprisoned by Charles V after the Protestant defeat at the Battle of Mühlberg (1547). This circumstance is one reason, along with the checkered building history of the Wittenberg church, that the painting's architectural context is uncertain.[13]

Figure 1.2 Albrecht Dürer, *The Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand Christians, c.* 1496. Woodcut, 387 × 284 mm. Washington, DC, National

Gallery of Art, Rosenwald Collection, 1943.3.3563.

Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington.

It has been assumed that Dürer's work was a wingless altarpiece that was part of the reliquary shrine in the Castle Church, described with pride in Wittenberg classicist Andreas Meinhardi's *Dialogus* (1508).[14] However, because of the bold centrality of the artist and the recently deceased poet, Doris Kutschbach suggested that the *Martyrdom* could not have been an altarpiece, but was possibly a cover or shutter for another work.[15] Paul Bacon has recently argued convincingly that Dürer's painting was probably not commissioned for the main space of the church at all, but for the Princes' Choir in the second-floor gallery on its west end: a private space linking the church and the castle for the use of Dukes Frederick and John and their families. Meinhardi did not mention Dürer's *Martyrdom*, unfinished as he was writing, but he did describe the current decoration of this space, with its scenes from Roman history and mythology and its portraits of Wettin princes, including Dürer's tempera-on-linen portrait of Frederick the Wise (1496, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin). The iconography of the decoration, Bacon notes, emphasized the traditional role of the Saxon princes as defenders of the faith against pagans and Jews.[16] Thus, the *Martyrdom* functioned as a meditative devotional image that specifically linked Christ's suffering and its reenactment by the ten thousand male martyrs with Saxon political power and Christian hegemony.

By mimicking the position of Christ or the martyred saints in altarpieces, the quasi-sacramental centrality of the two friends intensifies the theme of *imitatio Christi*, much like Dürer's merging of his own image with the Holy Face in the Munich *Self Portrait* of 1500.[17] Probably Celtis's death inspired Dürer to choose this remarkable placement, for one of his preparatory drawings, known by a copy in the Albertina, Vienna, shows that he initially considered a horizontal format in which he (*sans* Celtis) stands less conspicuously behind an executioner. In the painting, the visual weight of Dürer and Celtis's position and dark, sober clothing rivets the prolific detail and activity of the work and balances the saturated colors of the Ottoman and Mamluk garb worn by Hadrian's Persian allies in prominent positions in the foreground.[18] Note that one holds on to a little blond boy at the lower right, a detail to which I will return.

Masculinity and Martyrdom

Scholarship on this painting has focused on issues of iconography and historical context rather than gender; however, the boy, his Persian/Turkish captors and the tortured Christian men, as well as the artist, poet and their patron, all play roles in a masculine drama. We can gain insight into the particular maleness of Dürer's image from film studies and religious studies, where the wounded and tortured bodies of Christ or his surrogates and spectacular violence—done *to* Christ or his surrogates, as in the Roman arena, or *by* them in retribution, as in St. John's Revelation—have inspired much scholarship. A western cultural pattern of thought and imagery surrounding the martyred male body, related to Christ not only in his abjection, but also in his final violent, transcendent triumph, emerges. Women fit uneasily, if at all, into this pattern. In American action films of the 1980s, for instance, female characters may function merely as catalysts or witnesses to male martyrdom, or to affirm the hero's heterosexuality, while the physical suffering of action *heroines* carries associations of rape that are hardly triumphant, and their physical strength, of lesbianism.[19] Early Christian female martyrs (usually virgins) were often described as 'becoming male' in their deaths.[20] Moreover, the metaphor for the saved in Revelation, where Christian martyrdom is avenged on a cosmic scale, is 144,000 *male* virgins entering the New Jerusalem, while the metaphor for the Roman Empire is the Whore of Babylon.[21]

Studies of the male body in film help us interrogate Dürer's painted spectacle of male bodies. For example, to what extent do the martyrs' bodies, partly or wholly nude, function as erotic objects? Our gaze lingers on the beautifully rendered, kneeling, blindfolded figure in the foreground, although Dürer—like a film director considering field of vision and depth of field—positions us relatively far from the scene to prevent us from focusing too much on any one body, while moving our gaze through a surface and depth full of painfully focused details ('scopic trauma'), which would have been even sharper before the work was transferred to canvas between 1783 and 1837.[22] For westerns and combat films, theorists have asserted that spectacular violence among men represses homoerotic desire, and that same principle may be at work in Dürer's painting, with its urgent moral exhortation to German, Christian men that I will discuss below.[23]

The psychoanalytic principles informing film studies suggest that disabled or wounded bodies like these might also signify (to male viewers) castration, the horror of which is augmented here by hyperbole. Considering that the early modern male body in its ideal state, as exemplified by Dürer's 1504 Adam, was imagined as acting, not acted upon, and with a chiastic balance reflecting a harmony of humors and psychological states, we could say that the martyrs are feminized by their wounds and poses—limbs akimbo, kneeling and blindfolded (i.e. denied the gaze), falling off cliffs onto spiky trees, foreshortened and headless, bent over and bound. Their humiliated figures challenge the ideal impenetrable wholeness of the male body, and in films, such radical emasculation might be overturned or assuaged narratively and/or cinematically. Kaja Silverman's well-known analysis of William Wyler's postwar film *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), for example, traces the reinscription of masculinity on returning, traumatized, symbolically impotent veterans through their narrative reabsorption into the nuclear family, and the female characters' acceptance of traditional feminine roles.[24] An important point from Silverman's analysis for our purposes, however, is the anxiousness and incompleteness of this reinscription within the film's persistent repetition of scopic trauma and male loss. This sense of the potential loss of masculinity, then, remains along with its reinscription.

The wounded, tortured or disabled male body in film cannot be read simply in terms of a static binary framework where femininity is masochistic, passive, and lacking, and masculinity is sadistic, active, and whole. Rather, male characters may appropriate a feminized position as part of a process that ultimately vindicates their masculinity. Male masochism may serve as a point of identification for male viewers by tapping into their awareness of the insecurity of masculine hegemony, even when this hegemony is restored in the course of the film's narrative. Sylvester Stallone and Mel Gibson play hyperbolically masculine and violent heroes, but their bodies are also put on display, objectified and tortured (Figures 1.3 and 1.4). Within the narrative arc of these action films, the hero's torture and humiliation ultimately signal a masculine victory, if only in the future and if only for some men. As Jeffrey Brown notes in his analysis of the trope of torture in Gibson's films, by temporarily occupying a masochistic position, the hero actually recoups "some archetypal notion of masculinity, not necessarily in comparison to a feminization of the hero but relative to

mythical earlier models of masculinity."[25] And these earlier models of masculinity address anxieties present in the current world. In *Braveheart* (1995), for instance, the protracted sequence of the racking, castration and evisceration of William Wallace, visually echoing Christ's Passion, could be understood as a late-twentieth-century attempt to recapture a conservative, white working-class American masculinity, projected onto medieval Scots (Figure 1.3).[26] The *Rambo* films, Susan Jeffords has argued, may be understood in terms of a "remasculinization" of America in the wake of Vietnam: surviving gruesome torture and wounds that evoked Christ's suffering, Rambo revealed the potential for the healing of the wounded national body (Figure 1.4).[27] Nevertheless, having demonstrated the specter/spectacle of masculinity's undoing so viscerally, these films never entirely banish the possibility of its reoccurrence. Indeed, we may be led to reassess earlier assumptions about the power of the male (or the camera's) gaze.[28]

Figure 1.3 Torture Scene from *Braveheart*, 1995. Produced by Icon Entertainment International, the Ladd Company, and B.H. Finance C.V. Directed by and starring Mel Gibson.

Courtesy Photofest, New York.

Just as the contexts of mid-to-late twentieth-century America illuminate the presentation of masculinity in the above films, so the late medieval religious context of the imitation of Christ and heightened expectations of the apocalypse, as well as the context of the Turkish threat, make sense of the paradox of masculine submission and power in Dürer's painting. The

martyrs' mutilations are heroic wounds, constructed as masculine in Christian discourses surrounding saintly martyrdom and the Passion of Christ. Although painting is more limited in its capacity for storytelling than the temporal medium of film, the narratives central to the restoration of masculinity in the action films, however contingent, have their counterpart in the widely understood unfolding of Christian time. Christ will rise again, the martyrs' suffering will be rewarded and the enemies of Christ and the martyrs will be savagely punished. This is a story ending Dürer did not need to tell: everyone already knew it.

The Collective Body: Internal Insecurities and External Enemies

In its construction of heroic wounds as masculine and its emphasis on homosocial bonds among the sufferers and witnesses, Dürer's painting is akin to the plays produced and performed by English guildsmen. In her study of the York and Chester pageant cycles, Christina Fitzgerald emphasizes that, contrary to medieval Passion plays that cater to the affective piety associated with women, the Early Modern guild plays largely erase women and are addressed to men, authorizing homosocial bonds and institutions. Moreover, she demonstrates how the dramas enact masculine ideals of quiescence, isolation and withdrawal from domestic and even (paradoxically) homosocial relationships through the deeply ambivalent figure of Christ.[29] Gendered differently according to devotional context, Christ as a masculine model may be alternately present and distant —for example, he loves his disciples as brethren, but his emotional withdrawal and solitude withhold complete validation. Dürer's painting, too, excludes women to present a community of men whose bonds will presumably extend into the afterlife.[30] However, Christ is an absent presence for the martyrs—alluded to, imitated and desired, but not there.

Figure 1.4 Torture Scene from *Rambo*, First Blood Part II. 1985. Production Company: Anabasis N.V. Directed by George Cosmatos; starring Sylvester Stallone.

Courtesy Photofest, New York.

In Fitzgerald's analysis, the guildsmen's plays of the Passion and other biblical narratives not only authorize homosocial institutions but also present their internal tensions, like class differences and rivalries among artisan members, and external pressures like the power of the mercantile elite. These tensions are just as evident in the plays as their authorization of male dominance. In Dürer's painting as well, heroic martyrdom and the assertion of German cultural superiority, exemplified by the commanding centrality of the artist and poet, are present along with an insistent presentation of vulnerable, Christian male bodies that can be read collectively as the externally threatened and internally insecure and body of European Christendom.

At the time Dürer painted the *Martyrdom*, Europeans viewed the Turks—realistically—as a great threat, particularly to German territories adjacent to Ottoman conquests in the Balkans. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and before the failed siege of Vienna in 1529, it was doubtful that European Christians could withstand the Ottomans, whose amazing martial skills and savvy governance were admired, even as a barrage of printed matter bearing accusations of extreme cruelty, hedonism and deviant sexuality expressed European contempt for this formidable 'Other.'[31] Athens fell in 1458, and by 1479, Mehmet II had gained much of the Adriatic coastline. In 1480, just before Mehmet II's death, Ottoman forces besieged the southern

Italian city of Otranto, generating tales of enslavement and atrocities that Dürer's audience might have known, like the decapitation of eight hundred Christian men who refused to convert to Islam.[32] Although under Bayezid II, the Ottomans retreated from Otranto, raids on European territories continued.

European Christians increasingly associated the Ottomans with the Antichrist. In her study of the Ottoman imagery in Dürer's *Apocalypse* (1497–8), Heather Madar elucidates Dürer's expression of this idea, which was fully corroborated by contemporary writers such as Sebastian Brant and Wolfgang Ayinger.[33] In the *Martyrdom*, stances and gestures construct the Ottomans as arrogant and cruel agents of evil: from the director of the slaughter in the lower right, to the enthusiastic executioner on the left, to the turbaned figure seen from the back who harangues the bishop in the left middle ground. Moreover, in the visual language of northern art, their luxurious, brilliantly colored clothing confirms the Turks' moral excess.[34]

Figure 1.5 Erhard Schön, *Janissary with Two Prisoners*, 1529–30. Woodcut from the *Siege of Vienna* series. Nuremberg, Germanisches

Nationalmuseum, H395 Kaps. 53.

Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg.

A powerful sign of European vulnerability to the Ottoman threat is the little blond boy, held roughly by a man wearing the tall, red Mamluk *zamt*, at the lower right of Dürer's painting. Turks killing babies and children were staple motifs of anti-Ottoman polemical images: for example, in Erhard Schön's series of fifteen woodcuts on the Siege of Vienna (1529–30), created to inflame hatred of the Ottoman enemy. One woodcut shows a janissary leading two captive parents with their impaled baby (Figure 1.5).[35] Our blond boy, however, is alive, leading us to speculate about his fate. In the practice of *devşirme* (literally, 'collection'), the Ottomans conscripted Christian boys for a variety of positions within the empire, including military service, so perhaps the boy is destined for conversion and/or the janissary corps.[36] His innocent, outward glance exhorts viewers to return to the mythic masculinity exemplified by Christ and the martyrs, whose submissive, wounded bodies would be restored to full potency in resurrection and Paradise.

This apocalyptic rhetoric did not leave Europeans blameless. Central to it were concerns about the failure of the German nobility to unite against the Turks and the sense that Christian sinfulness contributed to European weakness. In the *Tractatus de Moribus* (Rome, 1481), translated into German in twelve editions from 1482/83 to 1531, Georgius of Hungary, enslaved by the Ottomans as a young man, displays an unabashed admiration for aspects of Ottoman society within an eschatological discourse of Christian disunity and immorality that will allow Islam to steal Christian souls. After much initial resistance, Georgius was nearly converted until he was suddenly overcome with Christian faith.[37] Thus, the intense bodily suffering of the martyrs provided models of masculine stoicism and unwavering Christian faith for sixteenth-century German men in the same way that Rambo or the medieval Scots of *Braveheart* suggested models for American men of the 1980s and 1990s. As Larry Silver has discussed, a nascent German nationalism, expressed by such writers as Celtis, Heinrich Bebel, Brant and Ulrich Hutten, also built on the image of ancient Germans in Tacitus's *Germania*, published in German in 1473.[38] The strength, bravery, moral rigor and simple (albeit pagan) piety of ancient

German soldiers could be envisioned in the Christian faith and endurance of the martyrs and held up as a model for contemporary men.

As Silke Falkner points out, German men attempting to define themselves in terms of the key Early Modern masculine value of moderation were aided by the exaggerated accounts of the sexual and violent excess of Turkish men. Thus, representations of Ottoman military atrocities and tales of polygyny, same-sex relations, anal sex and bestiality are what Falkner calls "inadvertent cultural self-representation."[39] The stereotype of the bloodthirsty, hedonistic and sodomitic Turk served to chastise Christian men who swerved from the path of virtue and moderation. The danger of sexual excess must also have been raised by Celtis's death in 1508, probably from the 'French disease' that appeared epidemically in Italy in the mid-1490s, spreading to Zurich, Frankfurt and Nuremberg in 1496. Although the learned opinions generated by this catastrophe admitted multiple, coexisting causes (God's retribution for sin, corrupt air, the stars, polluted humors, as well as contact with infected persons), some early authors recognized a connection to sex, and the lesions usually appeared first on the genitalia.[40] In 1500, Gaspar Torrella, one of Pope Alexander VI's physicians, argued for the venereal origins of the disease, prescribing that men avoid sex with infected women.[41] The broadsheet of an infected man issued by Anton Koberger in 1496 and attributed to Dürer promoted the theory of Joseph Grünpeck, then aspiring to a court position with Habsburg Emperor Maximilian I, that the first cause of the epidemic (after God's will) was a conjunction of the stars, but he also believed that sexual arousal contributed to the illness. Grünpeck, crowned poet laureate and appointed as Maximilian's personal secretary in 1497, claimed he contracted the disease that killed him after attending a party in Augsburg in 1501, hosted by Celtis—and also attended by Bacchus, Ceres and Venus.[42]

Martin Pollich von Mellerstadt, after whom the Leipzig sodality of Celtis was named (*Sodalitas Polliciana*), helped found the University of Wittenberg in 1502 and was Frederick's physician. In the late 1490s, Pollich had engaged in a bitter pamphlet battle about the causes of the French disease with Leipzig physician Simon Pistorius.[43] While in Venice in 1505–6, Dürer himself worried about a rash on his hands that prevented him from working, and wrote Willibald Pirckheimer to persuade an Augustinian friar to say prayers against the new disease "because nearly everybody here has

it."[44] From Dürer's *Martyrdom* and Hans Burgkmair's woodcut portrait of Celtis, sent out to friends in 1507 before he died, contemporaries were urged to remember the poet as a faithful Christian despite his sins of the flesh (Figure 1.6). Nevertheless, the presence of such a prestigious victim of the French disease in Dürer's painting, along with the negative example of the sodomitic Turk, constituted an exhortation to chastity aimed primarily at German Christian men: although the French disease also affected women, the rhetoric surrounding it tapped longstanding ideas about female sexuality and physiology to cast men as victims and women as agents of transmission.[45]

Like the English guildsmen's plays, then, Dürer's painting constructs a homosocial body, yet exposes its vulnerability. It also suggests divisions in this body: although the Turks command the event, some of their henchmen wear European clothes. This mixture of costumes conveys the fact that large numbers of converts or their offspring, or Christians who took sides with the Ottomans, served Ottoman military and bureaucratic institutions, and lends the martyrs' legend a contemporary resonance.[46] Venice was a prime example of complicity with the Ottomans: Dürer's choice of a Venetian courtesan as model for the Whore of Babylon in his *Apocalypse* expressed that view, along with the idea of Venice as a city of vice and luxury.[47] In addition, the bishop and surrounding figures who attempt to persuade or coerce him in Dürer's painting may well have raised the issue of Christian conversion to Islam.[48] The bishop's hands seem to be tied behind his back, while an augur in the foreground indicates the boring out of his eyes when he refuses to renounce his faith—the focus of Dürer's woodcut (Figure 1.2). A turbaned figure points out the carnage to the right, while a figure in red, interpreted as a judge presiding over the martyrs' trial, stands nearby.[49] A grotesque figure coded as a Jew and looking much like the gesticulating figure in Dürer's *Christ among the Doctors* (1506, Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid) also harangues the bishop.[50]

Not only does the *Martyrdom* raise the danger of Christian conversion to Islam, it also makes it difficult to construe the martyrs as unified, since forms of torture, although radiating from the center, are arranged episodically. Like the traumatized veterans in *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), the martyrs meet their fates differently depending on their social stations. Some are herded into crowds; others are singled out and rendered with exceptional detail. Katherine Luber has noted different painting

techniques, with the most exquisite treatment reserved for St. Achatius and the blindfolded figure in the foreground.[51] The collective Christian, German body of men, then, is presented as vulnerable to external threats, internal betrayals and social stratification as it faces a strong enemy.

Conclusion: Gender and the Body of Christ

In her study of English devotional literature, Sarah Beckwith argues that Christ's body (here conflated with the martyrs' bodies) helped form the identities of lay Christians, who challenged clerical ownership of that body in the Eucharist and in theological exegesis by giving it passionate attention, using its beauty and wounds as affective "entrances."[52] As revealed in his letters to Jacob Heller, Dürer lavished extraordinary care on this painting.[53] His courtly patronage and the inspiration of Venetian art contributed to this care, but personal piety played a role as well. Dürer's conflation of his own idealized or sick body with Christ's in his Munich *Self-Portrait* of 1500 or his drawn *Self-Portrait as the Man of Sorrows* (1522, Kunsthalle, Bremen), as emphasized by Donald McColl, shows how important this embodied, gendered piety was for Dürer's identity.[54] Christ's Passion pervades his art and appears in his vernacular poetry that David Price has analyzed.[55] The oscillation between a heroic, triumphant body of Christ, and one that is horribly tortured and abject occurs in his Passions of 1511–12 and is consistent with the shifting masculinity of Christ in the gospels, from the vulnerable Markan Jesus to the Johannine Christ, in control of his own martyrdom at all times.[56] Dürer internalized and gave form to alternate forms of Christ's masculinity. For his part, Celtis wanted to be remembered as a devout Christian, despite his attraction to pagan culture: indeed, Burgkmair's memorial woodcut states that explicitly: HIC IN CHRISTUS QUIESCIT—He Rests in Christ (Figure 1.6).

Figure 1.6 Hans Burgkmair the Elder, *Conrad Celtis*, 1507. Woodcut, 388 × 215 mm. Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art, Rosenwald

Collection, 1951.10.12.

Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington.

In her study of Burgundian devotional diptychs, Andrea Pearson shows how both men and women appropriated gendered forms of piety, based on the crucifixion or the incarnation, to convey status and power.[57] *The Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand Christians*, probably destined for the Princes' Choir, exemplifies such gendered appropriation. As devout witnesses, the artist and Celtis, along with the Saxon Dukes and privileged visitors to the Choir, share the crucifixion piety of the martyrs to gain access to the body of Christ. Centrally placed and singled out along with the most prestigious martyrs, they declare their fame as German, Christian poet and artist and stand unified, along with their patron and male audience, in the imitation of Christ, masculine friendship, German patriotism and mutual humanistic goals. Despite their solidarity, though, the ubiquitous images of emasculated, passively suffering male bodies must have been disconcerting to behold. The presence of Celtis, victim of the French disease, further emphasized the male body's fragility. However, there was always the promise of a militarized and indomitably masculine Christ returning to obliterate the enemies of pious Christians. As Bacon emphasizes, Frederick consistently resisted a violent crusade against the Turks.[58] In Christian cosmic terms, though, this violent crusade was merely deferred. In the Princes' Choir, along with images of Wettin dynastic power, Dürer's *Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand Christians* would have given a privileged status to male martyrdom. Women viewers would have been addressed only obliquely as adjuncts (mothers, wives, daughters or potential victims of the Ottoman menace) to a cultural pattern of violent suffering and triumph, played out by men through the vehicle of the male body.

Notes

1 The epigraph is from Conybeare (2002, 200).

2 This is especially true of his nudes. Dürer's innovative studies of the female nude are concentrated in the period through his second trip to Venice, largely as evidence of his interest in Italianate form. As he became more thoroughly engaged with religious imagery, the male nude had a ready vehicle in Christ, but there was much less scope for the female nude. I argued that one exception to this, the *Suicide of Lucretia* (Alte Pinakothek, Munich, 1518), betrayed an awkwardness based on the difficulty of conceiving heroism in a female figure; see Hults (1991).

3 Harlow (1998) and Simons (2011, 125–57).

4 See the essays in Moore and Anderson (2003), which explore the relationship between Jesus and the masculinities of Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures.
5 Reeser (2006).
6 Pippin (1992) and Frilingos (2003).
7 Beckwith (1993). On the shared eschatological frameworks of early modern Ottoman, Christian and Jewish cultures, see Krstić (2011, 7–12).
8 On the painting's iconography and textual sources, see Anzelewsky (1991, vol. 1, 75–7), Stöcker (1984) and Bacon (2013, 13–18). I am grateful to Professor Bacon for kindly sending me his article prior to its publication.
9 Bacon (2013, 11).
10 Versions of the legend sometimes omit the bishop entirely, and his name varies according to local devotional traditions. Stöcker (1984, 129–30) argues for the identification of the bishop in Dürer's painting as Hermolaus, based on his specific mention in the *Bamberg Breviary* and the presence of his relic particle in Frederick the Wise's collection.
11 Panofsky (1942). On Dürer and Celtis, see Wuttke (1980).
12 One of the differences between male and female saints is the more public nature of the male saints' deeds and miracles. See Weinstein and Bell (1982, 220–38).
13 On the building history, see Niehr (2008).
14 Panofsky (1942, 40) described it as an "altarpiece destined for the Schloßkirche in Wittenberg." For an extensive description of the Wittenberg relic collection, see Meinhardi (1976, 240–52). In his architectural history of the church, Niehr (2008, 344–51) reconstructs a general impression of the interior and main reliquary shrine near the high altar at this time.
15 Kutschbach (1995, 153).
16 Meinhardi (1976, 252–65) and Bacon (2013, 6–7).
17 Koerner (1993, 121–2).
18 Dürer began using the huge turbans and high tasseled caps of the Mamluks after his second trip to Venice in 1505–6; earlier, largely under the influence of Gentile Bellini, he had incorporated Ottoman headgear into his works. See Raby (1982, 30).
19 Tasker (1993, 14–34, 132–52) and Jeffrey Brown (1996, esp. 57).
20 On the relationship of early Christian martyrdom and masculinity, see Vorster (2003) and Cobb (2008).
21 On masculinity and the Book of Revelation, see Pippin (1992), Frilingos (2003) and Conway (2008, 159–221).
22 Schütz (1994, 70) (cat. no. 4).
23 See Neale (1993).
24 Silverman (1992, 65–90).
25 Brown (2002, 133).
26 Brown (2002, 135–6); see also Luhr (1999, esp. 229): "Both films [directed by Gibson, *Braveheart* and *Man without a Face*, 1993] intend to translate spectator horror at the violence enacted upon Gibson's characters into spectator revulsion at the social order perpetuating that violence; they also wish to provoke sympathy for a return to the conservative values Gibson's characters embody."
27 Jeffords (2005), excerpted from Jeffords (1994).
28 See Cohan and Hark (1993, 2).
29 Fitzgerald (2007).
30 To emphasize this future reward, Vittore Carpaccio included a detail of Paradise in his painting of the martyrdom (1515, Accademia, Venice). Sgarbi (1994, 182–5).
31 For European attitudes toward the Ottoman Turks in this period, see Bisaha (2004, 43–93); for accusations of Turkish sexual deviancy, see Falkner (2004, 401–27).

32 Bisaha (2004, 158–9) argues that the tale of the Otranto martyrs probably took at least two decades to develop (i.e. it may have been current *c.* 1500), although the news of the city's conquest alarmed Europe immediately. Despite the questionable historicity of the tale of the Otranto martyrs, Pope Francis recently canonized them: see Davies (2013).
33 Madar (2011).
34 Kelly (2001) emphasizes the relationship between sartorial splendor and moral excess in northern art.
35 On Schön's woodcuts, see Silver (2011).
36 Ágoston and Masters (2009), s.v. "Devşirme." Krstić (2011, 21), notes that the importance of the child levy for nationalist anti-Ottoman polemic outstripped the actual scope of the practice.
37 Georgius de Hungaria (1993). See also Classen (2003).
38 Silver (1998).
39 Falkner (2004, 407).
40 Early Modern concepts of disease in general admitted multiple causes; see Kinzelbach (2006). For the French disease specifically, see French and Arrizabalaga (1998) and Arrizabalaga (2005).
41 French and Arrizzabalaga (1998, 270).
42 Hayton (2005, 93–4, 101–3).
43 French and Arrizzabalaga (1998, 262–4).
44 Hutchison (1990, 91–2).
45 Siena (1998) and McGough (2005).
46 Krstić (2011, 54–58) and Bacon (2013, 17, 21).
47 Madar (2011, 174–5).
48 On the importance of conversion narratives, see Krstić (2011, 19–25).
49 Stöcker (1984, 132).
50 On Dürer and Judaism in general, see Price (2003, 169–93); on the identification of the Jew in *Christ among the Doctors,* see Carroll (1995, 49–54). Blacksberg (2013) significantly expands upon and critiques Carroll's discussion of *Christ among the Doctors.*
51 Luber (2005, 132–48).
52 Beckwith (1993).
53 Hutchison (1990, 99–100).
54 McColl (2010).
55 Price (2003, 110–23).
56 Price (2003, 181, 186). On masculinity in Mark, see Liew (2003) and Thurman (2003). For John, see Conway (2008, 89–106, 143).
57 Pearson (2005).
58 Bacon (2013, 19–20).

2 Hilarious Homoeroticism, or the Renaissance of Stereotypes in Filarete's Bronze Doors of St. Peter's

Peter Bell

Figure 2.1 Filarete (Antonio di Pietro Averlino), Bronze Doors of St. Peter's, 1433–45, right door, *Departing Greeks*, detail of Figure 2.7.

Per gentile concessione della Fabbrica di San Pietro in Vaticano.

The bronze doors of St. Peter's literally and symbolically provide access to Western Christendom. They were made by Filarete between 1433 and 1445 for Pope Eugene IV and they were reused as the central portal when the basilica was rebuilt in the seventeenth century—the only element of the

earlier facade that was retained. This essay addresses the presence of a singular homoerotic detail—a man groping another man (Figure 2.1)—in an elaborate iconographic program carefully engineered to combine religious with political meaning.

The doors are divided into six large panels (Figure 2.2), showing—from the upper left to the lower right—Christ as teacher; the enthroned Mary representing the Church; the apostles Paul and Peter standing, with Eugene IV kneeling to the right of Peter and receiving the keys; and the apostles' martyrdoms beneath. The space between these larger panels is filled with four smaller representations of historic events from the pontificate of Eugene IV, while the margins are decorated with acanthus scrolls, various mythological stories and other pagan motifs. On the back or interior of the left door, there is a self-confident signature relief (Figure 2.3), which—although it is often overlooked by visitors to St. Peter's—has been widely discussed by scholars.[1] The artist himself is shown in it leading members of his workshop, who are dancing in line behind him. This cheerful composition is accompanied by the epigram "CETERIS OPER[A]E PRETIUM FASTUS [NUM]MUS VE MIHI HILARITAS" (For others, the reward of the work [is] pride or money; for me, [it's] joyfulness).[2]

However, the "joyfulness" is not only the "reward of the work" but also an inherent part of the work itself. In contrast to the gravity of the monumental main figures of Christ, Mary, Peter and Paul (Figure 2.2), the entire system of decoration is portrayed as joyful and vivid. Structured by a strong acanthus pattern, the frame illustrates ancient stories and fables deriving mainly from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (as, for example, the intercourse of Leda and the swan, or Pygmalion's creation of Galatea), as well as various bucolic scenes with nude characters and outsized beasts.[3] It has not been overlooked that some of these scenes might be defined as, or as hinting at, homoeroticism. James M. Saslow has identified such scenes not only in the Rape of Ganymede, depicted on the edge of the right door, but also in the Martyrdom of St. Peter on the right door, and specifically the satyrs at play on one of the reliefs that decorate the building where the Emperor Nero is depicted seated on his throne (Figure 2.4).[4]

In the borders of the door, additional examples can be detected, as satyrs or older men are chasing or embracing younger ones, often with erect penises (Figure 2.5). Both in the margins of the door and the Martyrdom of St. Peter, these scenes could be interpreted as referring to the alleged

decadent lifestyle of the pagans and the Roman emperors. Although the appearance of such themes in a sacred location may be puzzling, they might easily be viewed as presenting immoral examples from an earlier age before the Christian era.

Figure 2.2 Filarete (Antonio di Pietro Averlino), Bronze Doors of St. Peter's, 1433–45, 7.14 × 3.63 m (including seventeenth-century additions).

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However, this interpretation is complicated by the fact that homoerotic elements can also be found in the representations of contemporary events on the doors. Four smaller panels between the larger relief fields show events from the pontificate of Eugene IV (1431–47), Filarete's patron.[5] Two panels depict the Council of Ferrara and Florence, showing the Byzantine Emperor John VIII Palaiologos and Patriarch Joseph II (Figures 2.6 and 2.7); one shows the coronation of Sigismund of Luxembourg; and the last depicts the union with the Copts and the pilgrimage of the Coptic delegation to Rome. The homoerotic detail of a man touching another man underneath his garment (Figure 2.1) is found in the panels illustrating the Council of Ferrara and Florence. Other details in these panels could relate to homoerotic behavior. They all concern the Byzantine delegation to ecumenical council and none of them have been sufficiently analyzed.

Figure 2.3 Filarete (Antonio di Pietro Averlino), Bronze Doors of St. Peter's, 1433–45, reverse of the left door, *Self-Portrait with Assistants*, 1445.

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The aim of this paper is to place these homoerotic allusions in their historical context. It reconsiders the propaganda strategy used by Pope Eugene IV, in which he attempted to downgrade the Greek Church and place it under Roman authority, and it compares the representations on the bronze doors with common stereotypes of the Greeks as homosexuals. The question at issue is whether Filarete's 'hilarious' treatment of the Greeks was intended as amusing irony or aimed at political marginalization.

The Papal Story of the Council of Union

In view of its location, materials and artistic conception, the bronze doors of St. Peter's can be regarded as the foremost portal in Christianity. The main theme of the doors concerns the power of the Church and its dual foundations. On the one hand, the scenes on the margins, as well as the lower scenes depicting heroes such as Publius Horatius Cocles, display the greatness of ancient Rome; on the other, the portal symbolizes the papal succession originating from the two apostles, Peter and Paul.[6] The mythological paradigm found on the margins of the portal is rendered obsolete by the martyrdom of the apostles, which in turn leads to the creation of a 'new' Rome. The *plenitudo potestatis*, the fullness of power, is symbolized by the enthroned Christ and Mary—who personify the Church—and by the attributes and martyrdoms of Peter and Paul.[7] It is also embodied, however, in the contemporary scenes related to the pontificate of Pope Eugene IV. The visits of the emperors Sigismund of Luxembourg and John VIII Palaiologos (Figures 2.6 and 2.7), as well as a delegation of Copts participating in the Council of Union, are shown on four panels. Sigismund and John are shown in a parallel setting kneeling in front of the Pope to indicate his primacy (Figure 2.6).

The papacy's claim to universality is also illustrated by the different scripts used all over the door—Hebrew, Greek, Arabic and Coptic.[8] Christians are shown in their cultural diversity, but Rome is represented as the center of the world. To enforce this impression, the cities actually hosting the Council—Ferrara and Florence (not to mention Basle)—are literally veiled. In the representations both of the arrival at Ferrara (Figure 2.6, right) and of the reading of the decree of union in Florence (Figure 2.7, left), draperies decorate the unspecified interiors. By contrast, the pilgrimage of the Copts to Rome shows an outline of the city with its walls and a church *fuori le mura*; the gate through which the Copts are processing is marked as "Roma."

Figure 2.4 Filarete (Antonio di Pietro Averlino), Bronze Doors of St. Peter's, 1433–45, right door, *Martyrdom of Saint Peter*, detail of the decoration of Nero's palace: *Satyrs Playing*.

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Figure 2.5 Filarete (Antonio di Pietro Averlino), Bronze Doors of St. Peter's, 1433–45, right door, border, detail with *Satyrs*.

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In 1437, Pope Eugene IV convened an ecumenical council in Ferrara in order to overcome the schism between the Latin and Greek Churches, and sent a Venetian fleet to Constantinople to bring the Byzantine delegation to Italy.[9] His aim was to outmanoeuver the delegation sent by the opposing Council of Basle, which was trying to reduce the power of the papacy and had also invited prelates from the Orthodox Church. In the schismatic crisis of the Latin Church, both factions were trying to win the support of the Greek Church in order to gain a stronger position. The Council of Ferrara, which was later transferred to Florence, did in fact restore the unity of the Church in 1439; and although the union was only short-lived and regional, contemporaries in the West regarded it as an overwhelming success. The decree of union was decisive for the primacy of the Roman pontiff—a fact that explains both the prominent position and the scale given to the representation of the Council on Filarete's doors. The event stretches across two panels (Figures 2.6 and 2.7) and continues on a third, depicting the union with the Copts and their pilgrimage to Rome.

In the first panel from the left (Figure 2.6), at the stern of the ship, the Emperor John VIII Palaiologos is seen in front of a canopy adorned with the Byzantine double-headed eagle. The figure sitting next to him is presumably the Greek Patriarch, Joseph II. Constantinople is implied as the home port only by a rocky coastline and, as *pars pro toto,* a portal with a frieze depicting the goddess *Abundantia*. A few Greeks remaining behind on the rocks are taking leave of their Emperor. John VIII is identified by his hat, known as a *skiadion*, as well as the cloak, both known from Pisanello's famous portrait medal of the emperor.[10] The Patriarch, on the other hand, can be recognized from his clerical robes and his position next to the emperor, as depicted throughout both panels (Figures 2.6 and 2.7). The way in which the ship is rendered suggests historical accuracy. However, the representation differs from textual sources concerning the Council; for example, while reports mention that Emperor John VIII Palaiologos and Patriarch Joseph II traveled on different galleys, only one is shown on the doors.[11] Filarete might of course have reduced the number for reasons of narrative economy. However, the solution chosen reduces considerably the rank of the Patriarch. He is partly hidden by the prominently shown Emperor. Whereas the Patriarch apparently assumed that they were equal pentarchs, Pope Eugene IV was using the Council to assert his own primacy. The curial documents consistently mention Patriarch Joseph II only after having first mentioned the Pope, and then the Emperor.[12] In accordance with this hierarchy, the relief always presents the Patriarch after the Pope and the Emperor.

Figure 2.6 Filarete (Antonio di Pietro Averlino), Bronze Doors of St. Peter's, 1433–45, left door, *The Voyage of the Greeks from Constantinople to Italy* and *Their Reception by Pope Eugenius IV in Ferrara*.

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This representational pattern displays a ceremonial hierarchy that was not actually observed at the Council, either in Ferrara or in Florence, but which reflects the self-image of the Pope. Thus, not only is Patriarch Joseph II demoted, but the degradation implied in the depiction also includes John VIII. The Emperor was warmly embraced by the Pope on his arrival in Ferrara 1438, but is inaccurately shown kneeling in front of him on the bronze door (Figure 2.6). This historical misrepresentation reaches a climax in the scenes depicting the reading of the decree of union in Latin and Greek and the departure of the Greeks in the right panel (Figure 2.7). In both scenes, the Patriarch is again represented next to the Emperor, which is surprising as Joseph II had died before the ceremonial culmination of the Council. As the vacancy of the patriarchy was a critical point in the agreement between the Churches, the representation of the events on the door glosses over the historical fact of the Partiarch's death by showing a version in which he lives on. In addition, in the left scene, which shows the declaration of the Bull of Union (Figure 2.7), the Emperor's throne is lower and less splendid than that of the Pope.

Another instance of power play can be observed with regard to the Emperor's galley (Figure 2.6). Its oarsmen appear to be prisoners of war—a status indicated by the typically shaped cap of a janissary worn by one of the oarsman, which defines him as a Turkish soldier. The impoverished Emperor, who in fact ruled a capital without a hinterland and whose chief interest in aspiring to the unity of the Church was to obtain military aid from the West, is here shown as a powerful ruler. In reality it was Venice and the Venetian Pope who paid for the transportation of the Byzantine delegation, as the Emperor could not have afforded it himself. By contrast, the Byzantine heraldic symbol on the ship and the nature of the whole scene appear to suggest that it was John's personal idea and intention to go to Italy and kneel before Pope Eugene. The representation of the Byzantine ruler parallels that of the Western emperor Sigismund of Luxembourg, whose investiture by the Pope is depicted farther down the door. Depictions of both emperors' departures—on horseback and facing in opposite directions—complete this crosswise composition.

Figure 2.7 Filarete (Antonio di Pietro Averlino), Bronze Doors of St. Peter's, 1433–45, right door, *The Declaration of the Bull of Union* and *The Departure of the Greeks*.

Per gentile concessione della Fabbrica di San Pietro in Vaticano.

The depiction of the entire ceremonial procedure on the right panel (Figure 2.7) shows the triumphal moment of unity. John VIII is now shown on horseback, recalling the ancient statue of Marcus Aurelius—with which Filarete was familiar in detail, as he had made a small bronze copy.[13] Unity has restored him to his former position, that of Roman Emperor. This is also indicated by the fact that the Pope addresses John by a different title after the agreement; he restored the title *Imperator Constantinopolitanus* to the Byzantine emperor. Since 1204, this designation had only been used by the Popes for western emperors.[14] This change of status can also be observed in the subsequent representation of the departure of the Greeks in the same panel (Figure 2.7). This is even more awe-inspiring than that of their arrival: the galley is adorned with ornamental flowers and has a different heraldic disposition. The double-headed eagle featured so prominently on the first relief (Figure 2.6) is now eclipsed by the figure of John, who partly hides the canopy (Figure 2.7). The papal arms—the keys of St. Peter and the emblem of the Pope's family, the Condulmer—now dominate the side of the ship.[15] They are flanked by the arms of Byzantium: the cross with four Bs and the double-headed eagle. Two coats of arms appear to display the lion of St. Mark, which is also shown on a flag at the bow. These represent Eugene's Venetian background and the Serenissima's participation in the mission. The vessel is thus designating the Emperor as a vassal of the Pope. In summary, the last panel restores the eastern Emperor to his former Roman dignity, which becomes possible after the union of the churches and strict submission to the Pope.

The Emperor's embarkation not only signifies his return to Byzantium, but also symbolizes the union of the Eastern Orthodox Churches with the

Roman Catholic Church. The metaphor of the Roman Church as a ship has traditionally been a central motif in papal iconography. Even the sources for the Council of Florence speak of *Petri navicula* and of the Church as a ship.[16] The Emperor's triumphantly decorated galley represents the united Church, and the boarding of the Greeks implies their inclusion in it. In addition, this ecclesiastical ship is in the midst of setting out on a crusade against the Turks. The most prominent representation of the Church as a ship is Giotto's famous *Navicella*, which has now been poorly restored but can be reconstructed from later drawings.[17] We can see in it Peter following Christ out onto the water. In Filarete's time, this enormous mosaic was located near the bronze door, affixed to a wall facing the atrium of the Old St. Peter's. Today it is even closer, positioned directly above Filarete's work in a lunette over the main entrance of the new basilica's portico. The two ships on Filarete's door share some general characteristics with Giotto's ship, such as the shape of their hulls and sails. It is possible that the galley's lateen sail has been deliberately concealed in the background in order to make it appear more similar still. The crouching Emperor seems to resemble the sinking Peter. However, his posture also corresponds to the last scene in the previous panel, in which Emperor Sigismund is seen kneeling in front of the Pope, and thus parallels John's humble boarding of the vessel.

In summary, the two relief panels (Figures 2.6 and 2.7) show a detailed representation of the Council with the Greeks. However, instead of simply documenting the events, the story is changed into a programmatic declaration of the primacy of the Pope over princes and patriarchs. Nevertheless, the power of the Byzantine emperor is restored to a balanced level with that of the Western emperor, presenting him as a worthy partner.

Homoerotic Interlude

In the last scene, showing the triumphantly departing Greeks (Figure 2.7), three men are seen standing close to the pier, between the two representations of the Emperor. Surprisingly, the man in the middle is touching the man before him beneath his garment (Figure 2.1). The Greek who is being touched has been given an unnatural twist, gazing back at the person touching him and spreading his leg to the right. In the process, he is pushing the Emperor, who is also seen in a rather awkward pose, further up

the gangplank—so that the whole sequence creates a peculiar impression in the otherwise dignified panel. The gesture of the man in the middle of the trio is emphasized by the folds in the robe of the man in front of him and by a bow in the hands of the man behind, which is pointing towards the grasping hand of the Greek in the centre. A bow generally stands for Cupid and love, and in this position it seems to have a phallic connotation as well. The gesture is further accentuated by the presence of the only Phrygian cap in the relief, which is found in the background right behind the central figure of the trio. The Phrygian cap has been a symbol of barbaric customs since antiquity.[18] In the context of the 'pointing' bow and the 'alluding' cap, the movement of the Greek's hand becomes explicit. The Greeks are being depicted not only with an exotic appearance—in particular with enormous headgear, extensive robes and long hair and beards—but also with deviant habits. The apparent groping is even more scandalous in view of the men's age. The active and passive figures both seem to be of a mature age. Even with the general leniency towards sodomy, a mature passive man would be destroying his reputation and his social position.[19] However, the scandalous act of groping is only implied in a discreet manner here and can be easily overlooked. At first glance, it might seem as if the 'groper' is only touching his own garment. But the scandalous act becomes obvious from the reaction of the person who is being groped, and it is underlined by the bow. Filarete is almost humorously forcing his audience to point a finger at this secretive act.

The Greeks display similar acts of intimacy elsewhere. For example, in the group bidding farewell to their prince (Figure 2.6, left), there are men standing close together in pairs. A boy who is sitting next to the cliff is being held in a nervous manner by an older man, whose anxious and solicitous behavior may appear effeminate. Additionally, the last figure in the long procession of prelates on the right is a beautiful boy. In contrast, the interactions among the Germans and Copts appear harmless. All of these potentially homoerotic scenes have to be placed in context with the peculiar appearance of the Greeks. From an Italian perspective, the long hair, long robes and plaits must have seemed effeminate.

Stereotypes and "Hilaritas"

Filarete's mockery of the Greeks seems to be a unique case in Quattrocento art. In addition, there is no evidence that any homoerotic incidents took place among the Greek delegation during the years of the Council. Still, there are some examples in contemporary literature that show a similar attitude. The visit of the Byzantine Emperor and the prelates was an exotic spectacle for Ferrara and Florence (and Rome). Particularly in the context of early Italian humanism, a great deal of attention was given to the behavior of the Greek guests. In Vespasiano da Bisticci's *Life of Pope Eugene IV*, for example, the Florentine bookseller and antiquarian compared the Byzantines positively with their ancient ancestors:

> I will not pass on without a word of special praise of the Greeks. For the last fifteen hundred years and more they have not altered the style of their dress; their clothes are of the same fashion now as they were in the time indicated.[20]

Vespasiano's friendly position towards the Greeks may have been inspired by the Graecophile social setting around Marsilio Ficino. The idea that ancient customs and costumes had been better preserved in the East led to the use of Byzantine figures in artistic representation. To illustrate antiquity, artists such as Piero della Francesca and Apollonio di Giovanni incorporated Greek apparel into their paintings.[21] These representations, however, concern figures related to antiquity and are therefore not comparable with Filarete's depiction of contemporary Greeks.

The dialogue *De curiae commodis* (On the Benefits of the Curia) by Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger is closer to Filarete's depiction. Written in Ferrara in 1438, it reflects fresh impressions of the Greek guests, which are discussed by Lapo and his friend Angelo:

> [Lapo:] The variety of their language, their character, their adornment, their dress, their bearing, and, finally, their bodies themselves leads not only to delight but also to laughter and wonderment.
>
> A[ngelo]: It is so. I mean, I never look at men of that sort without laughing. I see some of them with a beard that goes down to their chest, a thick hairdo, and curly, wild, and disordered hair. It is the same kind of thing that we have learned was characteristic of the Spartans (by the laws of Lycurgus), so that they would be all the more terrifying were they ever to come in contact with the enemy. Others have their beard just about shorn off and a half-shaved head, and still others have painted eyebrows. Of these, some wear felt caps—which are certainly different from one another—and some wear headbands with feathers of birds on top. Or they might wear some kind of golden band and long-sleeved tunics, just as Virgil said about the Phrygians: 'Their tunics have sleeves and their headbands gold.'[22]

Like Vespasiano, Lapo is also strongly reminded of the ancient Greeks when he sees the contemporary Byzantines; but his description shows them as being more exotic and grotesque, and therefore laughable. The quotation from the *Aeneid* at the end conceals a further reason for amusement, as the text in Virgil continues: "o vere Phrygiae, neque enim Phryges" (Phrygian women, in truth, not Phrygian men!).[23] The mockery expressed by the Italian Numanus (the brother-in-law of Aeneas' antagonist Turnus, Numanus is killed by Aeneas' son Ascanius after this insult) alleges that the Phrygian men are women. In the catalogue of oriental stereotypes that he enumerates, Numanus alleges that they are effeminate because of their costumes and behavior. Lapo applies this idea to the contemporary Byzantines. Their feminine garments are to be laughed at, and through the passage the laughter rises to a climax. Lapo is using the Council as a comical and exotic episode in his dialog.

Filarete's use of the foreigners in the scenes about Eugene's pontificate shares this idea. The Germans/Bohemians, Greeks and Copts are represented in a very detailed and exotic way. The artist attempts to entertain the viewer with his ideas and imagination. The homoerotic scene is thus part of this strategy. In addition to their different costumes, the deviant behavior of the Greeks is to be noted. The groping among the Greek men is to be seen as a surprising and comical interlude among the historical episodes. It transfers the stereotype of ancient Greek homoeroticism to the contemporary behavior of the Byzantines.

It is difficult to decide how deviant this behavior would have appeared to an Italian viewer. Lapo provides some allusions to homoerotic practices at the Curia. Similarly to Filarete's doors, legendary metamorphoses and Ovidian tales are used to suggest a deeper meaning:

> I could mention several young men recently brought into the Curia who, being of great talent, found such experienced and diligent teachers that, in a few months, they had grown up and become men, nor did Tiresias or Cinnea, I think, change form faster or more thoroughly.[24]

The members of the Curia are not only described as gods and Ganymedes —as mentioned earlier, the homoerotic allusion par excellence—they are also compared here with characters who changed their gender. Tiresias and Caeneus were two ancient mythological figures who were said to have changed their sexes twice. Cinnea changed into the hero Caeneus, and after his death "she changed into her old form," whereas Tiresias was changed

into a woman after striking two snakes, and back into a man after doing so a second time.[25] Florence, the main venue for the Council of Union, was in turn famed throughout Europe for the widespread homosexuality among its population.[26]

However, Filarete mocks ancient and contemporary homoerotic practices and his depiction of phalli and phallic symbols is not meant simply to entertain. He intends to illustrate a hierarchy between the immorality of antiquity and the Christian present day, as well as between the barbaric East and the civilized West. The Byzantines became the target of this discrimination, as it was assumed that Greeks were continuing a tradition that the Latin West had overcome. Religious propaganda is thus not the only factor that is shaping the representation of these historical scenes. In addition to the papal strategy of self-representation, there appear to be other influences at work here, such as long-standing stereotypes about the Greeks, which complicate the assessment of the present case. Of the many Italian prejudices concerning the so-called *Graeculi*, the belief in Greek homosexuality had continued to be strong since ancient times. Two prominent examples of homosexual Greeks were Plato and Socrates, who were both thought to have pursued immoral lifestyles. The belief in a homoerotic relationship between these two philosophers, as well as with younger men, was based on their biographies by Diogenes Laertius. The biographer provides information about the young favorites of Plato and quotes poems that the philosopher wrote for them.[27] Changes were made in the translations of these biographies, leading to different versions. Ambrogio Traversari, for instance, leaves the love poems out, ostensibly for stylistic reasons and his poor ability to translate rhymes,[28] whereas Guarino da Verona transforms the beloved Aster into a girl, *puella stella*.[29] Antonio Beccadelli, on the other hand, refers to Plato's love lyric in order to justify his own erotic poetry in a letter to his Florentine critic Poggio Bracciolini.[30] However, the homoerotic stereotype was so widespread that it became an important argument in the dispute between Platonists and Aristotelians. George of Trebizond's attack on Plato and Bessarion's defense is just one well-known example of this controversy. In his treatise against Plato, the Greek teacher and translator George of Trebizond condemned not only Plato's philosophical system, but also the lifestyle and behavior of the philosopher himself.[31] In this context, Filarete's choice to depict scenes with homoerotic allusions does not come as a surprise. Through his illustration

of homoerotic behavior, he is situating the Byzantines in the ancient Greek tradition.

Conclusion

Similarly to the epigram on the interior (Figure 2.3), the representations on the exterior of the doors relate to Filarete's intention to allude to "hilaritas." As the mythological scenes framing the major panels (e.g. the Rape of Ganymede) demonstrate, 'hilarious' also meant obscene. In particular, there are several bucolic scenes with nude, erotized figures (e.g., Figure 2.5, cf. Figure 2.4), which populate the acanthus together with oversized animals turning Ovid's *Metamorphoses* into an amusing story drawn from the natural world. Filarete also mocks the allegedly barbaric customs of contemporary Greeks (Figures 2.1 and 2.7; cf. Figure 2.6). Similarly to Lapo and Vespasiano da Bisticci, Filarete is depicting the Greeks in an ambiguous position between ancient and contemporary paradigms.

Filarete is ultimately suggesting that the union with the Latin Church will transform the deviant habits of the Greeks. The Pope's commitment to raise these old-fashioned, heretical Greeks out of sin and to guide them back to the Church is deliberately symbolized by a ship and it corresponds to the 'change' that Peter and Paul brought to ancient Rome. The use of so many episodes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* on the margins of the doors is not accidental. The entire portal depicts epoch-making metamorphoses, beginning with the transformation of mythological antiquity to apostolic Rome and continuing with the 'conversion' of heretics into united Christians: a second age of the primacy of the bishop of Rome. A residue of ancient and barbaric habits, Greek homoerotic misbehavior is 'transformed' into appropriate Christian moral comportment.

Nevertheless, Filarete gives the impression that this transformation has not been fully achieved, as the groping takes place after the declaration of the union. The story of the Council as depicted on the door can be read as a figurative representation of inclusion—specifically, the inclusion of the Greeks into the Latin Church. However, this inclusion did not lead to an equal partnership, but rather to obedience under the primacy of the Pope. This event is not only portrayed as a success for the papacy, but is also a programmatic reflection of the way in which the pope regarded himself and his position vis-à-vis these worldly princes. Regarding the panels portraying

the German Emperor Sigismund, the Greek Emperor (representing Asia) and the Coptic delegation from Africa, the portal can even be said to illustrate the submission of all three known continents to the Holy See.

Alongside this political interpretation, it also needs to be borne in mind that *hilaritas* was Filarete's goal. The groping scene challenges the viewer, makes fun of the effeminate appearance of the Greeks and perhaps comments ironically on the ambitious attempt of the Church to 'reform' them. Their hilarious appearance challenges only in part the political standing of the Byzantine Emperor and the Greek philosophical tradition. Similary to Lapo da Castiglionchio, Filarete is toying with the ambiguity of representation: whether the Greek figures are meant to suggest ancient philosophers or contemporary barbarians. While gender seems to be subordinate to stereotypes, it stands ambiguously between the rhetoric of political propaganda and the intended *hilaritas* of the artist.

Notes

1 For the most recent discussion and previous bibliography, see Glass (2013). Cf. in particular King (1990) and Winner (2001). For a detailed description and interpretation of the whole door, see Gnocchi (1999) and Glass (2011).
2 Translation by Glass (2013, 554). The article also includes a review and critique of previous translations.
3 For an extensive description of the scenes, see Sauer (1897) and Blänsdorf (1995).
4 Saslow (1986, 39–43).
5 These reliefs are treated more comprehensively in my Ph.D. thesis on the representation of Greeks in Italian art, Bell (2010). Cf. Bell (2012).
6 For a comparison of ancient and present-day Rome and the narrative structure of the door, see Thielemann (2002).
7 Cf. Nilgen (1988) and Stöckhert (1997).
8 Piemontese (1999).
9 For the history of the Council, the fundamental study is still Gill (1959). Cf. the collections of essays edited by Viti (1994) and Alberigo (1991).
10 See Weiss (1966). The portrayal of him in this costume and type can also be found in paintings by Piero della Francesca, Francesco Pesellino and many more; cf. the collected illustrations in Ginzburg (1985).
11 Syropoulos (1971, 196).
12 Gill (1964, 18).
13 Skulpturensammlung, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden. See Schweikhart (1993, esp. 372–6) and Glass (2011, 395–408 and Figures 86–9).
14 Norden (1958, 725).
15 See Bell (2012, 97, Figure 6).
16 Wohlmuth and Alberigo (2000, 517; 520).
17 For Giotto's *Navicella*, see the essays collected in Andaloro *et al.* (2009), Köster (1999/2000), and Köhren-Jansen (1993).
18 Harper (2005).

19 Koos (2006, 139–40).
20 Vespasiano da Bisticci (1963, 26).
21 Cf. Bell (2009).
22 *De curiae commodis*, VII, 7: "… quorum varietas linguae, morum, cultus, habitus, incessus, corporum denique ipsorum non delectationi modo, sed etiam risui, admirationi sunt. A: Est ita profecto. Nam ego huiusmodi homines numquam sine risu aspicio. Etenim video alios prolixa ad pectus barba, densa coma, capillo crispo, horrido et inculto, cuiusmodi Spartiatas Lycurgi legibus fuisse accepimus, quo terribiliores essent, si quando manus cum hoste consererent; alios detonsa parumper barba, semiraso capite; picto alios supercilio, horum partim pilleis et iis quidem dissimilibus partim mithris erectis in summo avium pinnis aut aureo aliquo redimiculo, manicatisque tunicis utuntur, ut de Phrygibus poeta inquit: 'Et tunicae manicas et habent redimicula mithrae." Celenza (1999, 170).
23 Virgil (1983, 282) (*Aeneid*, IX, 614–20): "You people dress in yellow and glowing red, / You live for sloth, and you go in for dancing, / Sleeves to your tunics, ribbons to your caps. / Phrygian women, in truth, not Phrygian men! / Climb Mount Dindyma where the double pipes / Make song for the effete, where the small drums / And the Idaean Mother's Berecynthian / Boxwood flute are always wheedling you! / Leave war to fighting men, give up the sword."
24 I follow here the translation and interpretation given by Watkins (1992, 140–1). Cf. Celenza (1999, 67–8).
25 Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI, 448–9, and Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III, 316–49. See Celenza (1999, 141), note 21.
26 See, in particular, Rocke (1996). For popular preachers against sodomy, cf. Debby (2001).
27 Diogenes Laertius (1925, vol. 1, 28–33). Cf. Kaiser (2012).
28 See Ricklin (2011, 129–42).
29 See Hankins (1987, 166–70).
30 See Kaiser (2011, 215–20).
31 See Kaiser (2013). Cf. Monfasani (1976, 201–29). For the relationship between Aristotelianism and Platonism, see Garin (1939).

3 Carnal Desire and Conflicted Sexual Identity in a 'Dominican' Chapel

Robin O'Bryan

Figure 3.1 Filippino Lippi, *Adam*, detail of Strozzi Chapel vault, 1487–1502, fresco. Santa Maria Novella, Florence.

Photo: Mondadori Portfolio / Archivio Antonio Quattrone / Antonio Quattrone.

In his early fifteenth-century *Oration in Disgust of Women*, Lionardo Giustiniani, love poet turned spiritual writer, gives a scathing commentary

on the 'weaker' sex:[1]

> The beauty and wiles of females distract men from the toils of virtue. They entrap us in their snares and we fall headlong into ruin. For even the coarsest female beauty is enough to destroy the human race, let alone all of their other enticements. This beauty subdued Adam, Paris . . . and Hercules . . . Therefore, young men . . . . Beware of their wiles, arts, and traps, the wicked hissing and colored skins hidden under their golden and purple clothes. Be free and refuse to submit to such an untamed and indignant animal [*liberique et indignanti animali*]. If this does not disturb you, then at least let their unbridled habits excite fear in you and make you more cautious of their embraces.[2]

Speaking in the parlance of early Church fathers who portrayed women as evil temptresses, the author uses a metaphorical construct that had gained in currency in the Middle Ages.[3] But while his analogy was clearly intended to invoke associations with the biblical Temptation, in castigating women for their perceived predatory and animalistic practices, he implicitly overturns the conventional model which assigns the more dominant role in human relations to the male species.

Painted at century's end, a fresco by Filippino Lippi (Figure 3.1) in the Dominican church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence might be seen as an illustrative counterpart to Giustiniani's exhortations. On the vault of Filippo Strozzi's burial chapel, the artist portrayed Adam—without Eve—in a scene of temptation that departs markedly from iconographic convention and the Scriptural account.[4] In essence, Lippi has conflated the 'before' and 'after' events of the biblical narrative. Adam is shown wearing an animal skin given to him by God after the Fall; he also holds a hoe, emblematic of his life of toil. At his knee is a small boy, whom we take to be the product of Adam's carnal knowledge of Eve following their Expulsion from Paradise.[5] As Adam enfolds him in a protective embrace, the child leans in to clutch at Adam, recoiling in terror from the female serpent wrapped around the trunk of an adjacent tree. The serpent, meanwhile, who here takes the form of a beguiling redhead, engages Adam in a crippling eye lock, attempting to entrap him further with her encircling tail. As if to neutralize the threat, Adam places his right foot on the encroaching appendage, but his enfeebled expression and cringing posture portend his difficulty at overcoming her persuasive charms.

Focusing on the 'ocular intercourse' taking place between Adam and the female serpent, in this essay I examine the subtext of carnal desire and sexual identity in Lippi's provocative presentation. A key part of my discussion centers on the serpent, not only in providing her with a formal

identification, but also in establishing her significance in the humanistic and theological culture of late Quattrocento Florence. I further argue for Dominican primacy in shaping Lippi's unusual iconography, showing how this grand exposition of wanton display was meant to serve a didactic purpose in modulating social and moral comportment. Paradoxically, however, although conveying clearly defined behavioral expectations for both men and women, I suggest that the bodily features and postures used for Adam and the serpent were rendered in such a way as to muddle gender differences. Ultimately, I propose that the impetus for this ambiguous treatment was bound up in contemporary ideas linking sodomy, homosexuality and witchcraft.

Figure 3.2 Filippino Lippi, *The Patriarchs*, Strozzi Chapel vault, 1487–1502, fresco. Santa Maria Novella, Florence.

Photo: Scala / Art Resource, New York.

Assessing the Serpent's Significance

Rather surprisingly, analysis of the Strozzi Chapel iconography has typically downplayed or ignored the potent sexual tension in Lippi's temptation scenario.[6] Since the chapel was meant to serve a funerary function for Filippo Strozzi and his heirs, Adam's interaction with the serpent has been interpreted relative to the overall chapel program and its message of salvation and resurrection.[7]

In this respect, Adam's inclusion on the vault with Noah, Jacob and Abraham (Figure 3.2)—the patriarchs who traditionally served as metaphors for resurrection—has led some scholars to see the placement of Adam's foot on the serpent's tail as signifying triumph over sin, and hence salvation.[8] While this interpretation has merit, it seems clear that Lippi intended for Adam's *dialog* with the serpent to command more attention. That is why he placed the two figures in the most prominent section of the vault (Figure 3.3) and why he showed Adam as the only one of the patriarchs *not* looking down in the direction of Strozzi's altar and tomb below. Accessible to congregants even above the *ponte* that originally divided the nave, their visibility was made all the more conspicuous given the physical location of the chapel itself, immediately to the right of the main altar.[9]

Figure 3.3 Filippino Lippi, Strozzi Chapel, 1487–1502. Santa Maria Novella, Florence.

Photo: Mondadori Portfolio / Archivio Antonio Quattrone / Antonio Quattrone.

Scholars have similarly misread the significance of the female serpent, generally seeing her as an emanation of Eve in recognition of Eve's role in bringing about the downfall of the human race.[10] This conflation of Eve and the serpent was traditionally expressed in imagery by showing the two exchanging glances, or by portraying the snake with Eve's features, a nod to Peter Comestor's twelfth-century axiom that "Satan chose a certain kind of serpent . . . having a virginal face, because like things applaud like."[11]

In Florence, Masolino's *Temptation* in the Brancacci Chapel (1425) (Figure 3.4) shows Adam and Eve standing next to the Tree of Knowledge, while overhead a serpent with rather angelic features and the same blond hair as Eve gazes sweetly down upon them.

Although noticeably damaged, Uccello's version (ca. 1460) (Figure 3.5) in the Chiostro Verde adjoining the church of Santa Maria Novella portrays the serpent in a similar bland manner, her features suggesting a kinship with Eve, whom she has turned to face. Lippi had intimate knowledge of both works (he had painted frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel a few years earlier), but in the Strozzi Chapel he departs radically from these prototypes. Not only does he portray the serpent with disheveled, flaming red hair, but more importantly—and for the very first time—he shows her locking eyes with *Adam*. This marked deviation from artistic precedent does little to support the Eve identification. Instead, I propose that the female serpent here was actually meant to represent Lilith, the ancient she-demon of Jewish legend.[12]

Lilith's Cabalistic Pedigree

Lilith represents a conflation of the Mesopotamian goddess Lilitu (or Lamashtu), and Lamia from Greek mythology, both female demons who killed children by sucking their blood.[13] In the Old Testament, Isaiah 34:14 presents Lilith as a screech owl, one of the evil creatures that remained after God wrought vengeance on the earth.[14] St. Jerome, in his fifth-century Vulgate, translated 'Lilith' as 'Lamia,' the latter of which came to be synonymous with 'demon' and 'witch' in subsequent Latin texts.[15] Medieval Cabalistic and rabbinical texts retained the Lilith nomenclature, expounding on her sexual depravity. These works also associate Lilith with

the serpent. The *Zohar*, one of the most influential of Cabalistic writings, refers to Lilith as "the Serpent, called Woman of Harlotry."[16] Of special importance, these texts portray Lilith as Adam's first wife.[17] According to the legends, Lilith was created at the same time as Adam, and thus resisted playing a subordinate role, even refusing to lie beneath him during sex. She then fled to the Red Sea, where she began coupling with demons, eventually marrying the king of demons, Samael (Satan). God sent three angels to lure her back, but she spurned their entreaties, only returning to seduce Adam after he was with Eve. Lilith spent her existence roaming the earth as a succubus (a demon in female form) copulating with men as they slept, and giving birth to countless demon children, both incubi (demons in male form) and succubi like herself. But far more disturbing than her predatory sexual appetite was her penchant for killing human children, particularly boys.[18]

Lilith's Cabalistic pedigree thus helps to explain some of the more curious aspects of Lippi's iconography. In portraying the serpent with red hair (rather than blond or brown as typically shown) and in the act of enticing Adam, Lippi evokes the *Zoharic* description of Lilith as the serpent and harlot whose "ornaments for the seduction of the sons of man are [that] her hair is long and red like the rose . . ."[19] Similarly, the merging of the Genesis time line to show the serpent with Adam *after* the Fall, makes reference to Lilith having returned to seduce Adam after he was 'married' to Eve. The gratuitous addition of the three scuffling putti in the cloud bank directly below Lilith evokes the three angels God sent to lure Lilith back to Adam. And Lilith's legendary reputation for killing children—especially boys—pointedly suggests why this *male* child holds on to Adam for dear life. This element of the composition does much to reinforce the Lilith identification even as it argues against the Eve persona, since neither pictorial nor textual sources portray Eve as inspiring fear in children, particularly her own.[20]

Figure 3.4 Masolino da Panicale, *Temptation of Adam and Eve*, 1425–7, fresco. Brancacci Chapel, Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence.

Photo: Alfred Dagli Orti / The Art Archive at Art Resource, New York.

Figure 3.5 Paolo Uccello, *Creation of Adam and Eve and Original Sin, c.* 1445–55 (?), fresco. Chiostro Verde, Santa Maria Novella, Florence.

Photo: Scala / Art Resource, New York.

Issues of Agency

The representation of this Cabalistic character in a Christian setting speaks to the growing interest in Cabala among Italian humanists and their patrons in the fifteenth century.[21] Filippo Strozzi's contemporary Lorenzo de' Medici sponsored the translation of Cabalistic texts at his famed Platonic Academy, which numbered among its members Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (the first "Christian Cabalist") and Marsilio Ficino.[22] Ficino himself had specific ties to Strozzi, having been consulted to provide an astrologically propitious date for the construction of Strozzi's new palace begun in 1489; his name has also been linked with the chapel's iconographical scheme (in conjunction with the musical instruments depicted on the window wall).[23] Notably, Ficino seems to have had some

acquaintance with the Lilith/Lamia legends, probably from a Cabalistic source, since in his contemporaneous writing he employed the 'screech owl' nomenclature in reference to 'wise old women' who kill babies by sucking their blood.[24] His putative involvement with the Strozzi Chapel program is intriguing because both he and Pico were developing ideas that allied Cabala with magic and demonology, very timely topics at the end of the fifteenth century. Both, moreover, had close ties to the Dominican community.[25]

As a Cabalistic motif, Lilith's insertion into the chapel's iconographical program would have been just the type of esoteric reference favored by enlightened patrons in their artistic commissions.[26] However, it is not clear whether Filippo Strozzi shared in the contemporary interest of Cabala—and if he would have approved of the sexual subtext of the vault's patriarchal theme. The circumstantial and documentary evidence sheds little light on the matter. The original 1487 contract for the chapel decoration, vague at best, makes no reference to Cabala—nor to Lilith, Adam or the Patriarchs—and the vault had apparently not been painted by the time Strozzi died in 1491.[27] During the years 1488–92 Lippi was occupied with a fresco project in the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome, painting the chapel of Cardinal Oliviero Carafa, Protector General of the Dominican Order and a descendant of St. Thomas Aquinas.[28] This undertaking was followed by frescoes for Lorenzo de' Medici's newly-acquired Villa Spedaletto near Pisa.[29] By the time the artist resumed work on the chapel in Florence, Strozzi's son Alfonso had assumed oversight of the project, and Marco Parenti (Strozzi's brother-in-law) may have also stepped in to serve in an advisory capacity.[30] Once again, however, there seems to be no written record of their specific involvement in dictating the content of the iconographical program. In fact, an examination of the *iconographical* evidence suggests they may have simply deferred to the Dominican 'overlords' of Santa Maria Novella.[31]

Dominican Dogma and Didactic Imagery

By the late fifteenth century, the church of Santa Maria Novella had emerged as an important center of religious orthodoxy and a bastion of political conservatism for its Dominican brotherhood.[32] Originally founded as a militant order to fight heresy, the Order of Preachers had established

residence in city neighborhoods, where they devoted themselves to teaching, preaching and saving the souls of their lay constituency.[33] To that end they employed a system of 'vernacular theology' to assert their orthodox agenda, supplementing their teaching of Christian doctrine with a variety of secular and hagiographic texts.[34] Dominican imagery and sermons reflected this syncretic approach. In their homilies, the friars typically used metaphors and stories that hinged on a dialectical twist; hence, for example, prostitutes were told of Mary Magdalene who had repented of her lascivious ways.[35] As leaders in the urban community, the Dominicans also preached the importance of maintaining civic harmony, emphasizing the Thomist *bene comune* ('common good') as the foundation of the successful state.[36] In this respect, they played an influential role in enforcing rules on moral conduct, guiding the members of their flock into leading lives of virtue and offering marital advice to women.[37]

Within its Dominican setting, the Adam–Lilith seduction scene serves as a very eloquent expression of the Order's didactic and dialectic preaching methodology, offering in one concise pictorial statement a valuable lesson on social and religious comportment.[38] Although the dialog between Adam and Lilith displays no explicit carnal intercourse taking place, the inevitability is suggested—and made clearer by the phallic-looking branch emanating from Lilith's trunk. Its sprouting fig leaves remind us that *fica/fico* in Italian were well-known puns on female genitalia and fornication (from *ficcare*, meaning to 'drive' or 'thrust'). The underlying moral was clear: sexual temptation was a danger to society. Such behaviors carried consequences for the immediate family (whereby coquettish displays led to sexual compromise, thereby disrupting the household), as well as for the greater social network (wherein the unstable family unit was a threat to civic harmony).[39]

To reinforce this point, Lilith is presented as an exemplar of moral decay. Lippi gives her long, flyway tresses, traditionally viewed as the source of temptation, which further distinguished her from respectable married or betrothed women who wore their hair bound or covered.[40] A far more disgraceful display is Lilith's action of staring directly into Adam's eyes. A strong tradition in the Church linked vision with temptation and sin, with priests such as the Franciscan San Bernardino of Siena using the pulpit to exhort female congregants to "bury [their] eyes" lest they meet the gaze of the male sex.[41] Failure to do so suggested loose morals, particularly if a

woman did not blush at the impropriety. Lippi's Lilith portrays no such change in her facial coloring, a telltale sign of her promiscuity and reminiscent of the friar's pronouncement, "You have the brow of a harlot, you have refused to blush."[42]

Lilith's 'posture' (Figure 3.1) had further negative connotations for female behavior. The tree support upon which she is coiled replicates a torso, a comparison enhanced by the knot which forms a 'breast' at the appropriate point in her trunk, revealing a décolleté that was clearly meant to titillate.[43] Moreover, the branch that she extends toward Adam simulates an arm, which Lippi has emphasized by giving it a flesh-toned hue and by placing a fruitlike object in its twiggy clutch. Flouting the Florentine social convention requiring young ladies to place their hands on their girdle directly in front of them, Lilith here displays the "over-free" hands of a temptress[44]. Additionally, her expansive tail, which winds around Adam, was no doubt meant to evoke the trains of women's dresses that were similarly suspect. Such accouterments—referred to in Latin and Italian as *caude/code,* or tails—had brought the censure of ecclesiastical authorities, who saw them as symbols of indecency and immorality, like the dresses of prostitutes.[45]

Lilith's body language and physical attributes provide clear visual evidence of her corrupt fiber, but the legendary Lilith herself served to symbolize the kind of depraved sexual license that was seen to undermine social order.[46] Ideas on sex derived from the Dominican St. Thomas Aquinas and promulgated by church officials held that intercourse between husband and wife was expressly for the purpose of producing children. The sexual positions themselves were also regulated, with women expected to lie *beneath* their husbands during sex, a submissive position that was considered to be the most beneficial for impregnation. At the same time, any posture that departed from this norm connoted sexual deviance—and subversive behavior that threatened male authority, and hence civic harmony. Chief among these prohibited positions was that of the so-called 'woman on top,' a literal and figurative emblem of female domination and a popular topos in late fifteenth-century Florence.[47] An anonymous Florentine carnival song from the same period lamented that

> Women want to become husbands
> They seek to wear breeches and dominate
> Poor virtù has almost been dispersed

Because the world is all upside-down.[48]

In view of her legendary background, we should see great significance in the fact that Lilith has been given pictorial expression during the same period that witnessed a growing societal concern over the issue of domineering women.[49] Representing the antithesis of the Florentine female bred to be submissive, modest and especially chaste, Lilith stands as a potent symbol of this inversion in the prescribed order. In the Strozzi Chapel, her juxtaposition with the *exempla virtutis*—the Virgin Mary (shown twice), Charity (suckling a baby), Fidelity and Parthenice (i.e. virgin maiden) portrayed on the window wall directly below—serves as an excellent example of the Dominican preference for dialectical instruction.[50] This didactic analog would similarly explain why Lilith was included among the patriarchs on the vault, her presence reminding of God's directive to Eve: "And you shall be subject to your husband and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3:16).[51]

Lippi's rendering of Lilith was meant to have instructive value for the feminine viewer, but the lessons to be learned from Lilith's and Adam's seductive interplay would have been an equally pertinent inducement for men to reassert their authority—sexual and otherwise—over women. Lippi shows Adam attempting to do just that by placing his foot on Lilith's tail while holding the hoe upright between his legs, a phallic prop that serves to counterbalance Lilith's vertical tree posture (Figure 3.1). Representing Adam's life of toil, the hoe also invokes the sexual position most conducive to impregnation. The 'planting of the male seed' was equated metaphorically with the 'plowing of the earth' (i.e. the 'missionary position'); hence, an implicit reference to masculine control and female subjugation.[52] The message was clear: the good of society depended upon men enforcing their patriarchal duty and women remaining in their rightful, subjective place.

Lilith the Consummate Witch and the *Malleus Maleficarum*

That Lilith should have been represented at this time in the Dominican church setting is no coincidence. Significantly, her portrayal follows on the heels of the 1486 publication of the *Malleus Maleficarum* (The Hammer of

Witches), one of the most influential works of the period to deal with the growing and pervasive theological concerns over witchcraft. Written by Heinrich Kramer, a Dominican inquisitor from Germany, the *Malleus* received official endorsement with the inclusion of Pope Innocent VIII's bull, which had given the friar carte blanche in ferreting out those who, "unmindful of their own salvation and straying from the Catholic faith, have abandoned themselves to devils, incubi, and succubi" (among other sins).[53] A compilation of popular superstitions and earlier Dominican writings on the subject, the treatise not only offered an encyclopedic account of witches' activities, but also dealt with the weightier philosophical issues pertaining to demonic copulation.[54] As such, it made an excellent handbook for the clergy, providing them with instructive guidelines for delivering sermons about witchcraft, and framing key issues in the dialectical model favored by Dominican preachers.[55] Notably, many of the *Malleus*'s claims about witches bear a marked resemblance to aspects of the Lilith legend, which does much to confirm the Dominican familiarity with the Cabalistic prototype.[56] Nor should this be surprising given that the Dominicans were the most educated of religious orders, and that their role in battling heresy required extensive theological preparation.[57]

We may therefore see Lippi's rendering of Lilith and Adam as a cogent exposition of the ideas set forth in the *Malleus*, with Lilith serving to epitomize the consummate witch.[58] The overarching thrust of the text was concerned with women's sexual appetites, which, it was alleged, naturally predisposed them to witchcraft. Oversexed and gullible, women were easily seduced by Satan, who after having sex with them turned them into witches. As handmaidens to the devil, witches set out to destroy the family and state, bewitching men with their gaze, usurping male authority and engaging in profligate sex. Witches impeded marital procreation by causing impotence. Far more disturbing, they had sex with demons and sired demon offspring.[59] This latter contention may help to explain the redheaded child appearing with Adam and Lilith in the fresco. While popular belief ascribed red hair to witches, in Lippi's scenario the child was undoubtedly meant to be read as a product of demonic sexual union.[60] This subtle but chilling detail gave tangible expression to the *Malleus*'s warning that witches and demons were multiplying rapidly, all part of a grand design to obstruct men's paths to salvation.[61]

Witchcraft, Sodomy and Gender Identity

Conforming to the Dominican preference for communicating orthodox concepts in easily understandable terms, Lippi's vignette offers a very real and cautionary lesson on the dire consequences of giving in to sexual desire. But while serving to provide proscriptive behavioral guidelines for appropriate male and female behaviors, especially those that reinforced the status quo of male domination, the rendering of Adam's and Lilith's figures actually convey conflicting ideas on sexual identity. From the 'waist' up Lilith reads as female, but her lower half gives way to a distinctive phallus complete with 'testicle' at its base.[62] On the other hand, Adam's muscular body reads as decidedly male. His massive physique, given added bulk by the animal skin cloak, presents a stark contrast to Lilith's 'naked' and slender serpentine form, a graphic affirmation of masculine versus feminine bodily constructions and power. Paradoxically, however, the ox skin covering Adam neutralizes the positive connotations associated with male nudity, traditionally suggestive of 'physical, spiritual and moral strength.'[63] To reinforce his moralistic failings, Lippi gives Adam's body a greenish tint, the color traditionally used to denote devils and demons—and the very same hue the *Zohar* ascribed to Adam's body as it was contaminated by Lilith's evil spirits.[64] Lippi also shows Adam *seated*, his shoulders slumped as he tilts up his head and eyes to face a towering upright Lilith whose visual onslaught renders him impotent. Here Lippi pays homage to the *Malleus*'s contention that the power of a woman to bewitch a man through her gaze (fascination) was a product of the *recipient's* imagination, thus putting the onus on Adam.[65] Adam's 'flaccid' versus Lilith's 'erect' postures would duly have been read as a euphemism for the sex act itself. Cast as the sexual aggressor, Lilith's copulatory intentions are made manifest by her phallic protuberance and by her extended tail, or *coda*, which doubly served as slang for penis.[66] In this position, she stands ready to enter Adam's enveloping skin sheath, its topmost conspicuous opening and labial fold serving as an appropriate symbol for the receptive female anatomy.

Overturning the conventional gender roles in which men were the penetrators and women the penetrated, Lilith thus assumes the 'active' role in this carnal equation, the foil to Adam as 'passive' participant.[67] But as well as symbolizing the loss of male power to an overbearing woman,

Adam's passivity would have conjured up associations with sodomy. And that is precisely why Lilith's appearance in this scene of sexual desire is so significant. As the emasculating witch famous for dominating the carnal act, she served to assert theological views on the relationship of witchcraft to sodomy.[68] Not only were both heretical behaviors believed to lead to weak and effeminate men, but both sodomites and witches went against Church teachings in using sex for nonprocreative purposes.[69] Both moreover were guilty of infanticide: witches for causing impotence and killing babies in (and out of) the womb, and sodomites for wasting their generative semen, or as San Bernardino put it, for killing "the babies who were never born."[70] That sodomy and witchcraft were related in the social consciousness of the day is further suggested by their shared metaphors. Lilith's legendary connection to the screech owl (*strix* in Latin) gave way to *strix* also being used to signify 'witch,' while the vernacular *gufo* (owl) designated a male who offered himself as the receptive sexual partner.[71] Herein lies another key to interpreting the Adam–Lilith exchange.

Although the practice of sodomy was tolerated in Florentine society, the receiving end in anal intercourse was really only 'acceptable' for younger boys and females.[72] When this role was assumed by *adult* men it signified homosexuality, a transgression of gendered behavior that not only disgraced the individual personally but also threatened the 'virile identity' of the male community at large.[73] In portraying Adam as the ineffectual male, Lippi reinforces the allusion to his sexual receptivity—and thus his compromised masculine gender—with the conspicuous *guaina*, or sheath (Latin *vagina*) formed by his animal skin cloak.[74] He also emphasizes Adam's *mature* status by showing him bearded and in the company of the noticeably older, bearded patriarchs on the vault. As for Lilith, as she looks to Adam she extends her 'hand,' which holds a fruitlike object, its shape and color suggestive of a peach. While peaches were used in contemporary literature in reference to illicit sex and sodomy, the act of *offering* a peach was literary code for the passive male role in sexual encounters.[75] In this explicit scene of lascivious desire, the rendering of Lilith's corporeal form would have invited further associations with bestiality.[76] After all, Adam the man is in a battle of wills with a woman whose body takes the form of a *serpent*, an abhorrent creature even apart from its inherited diabolical associations. That these allusions to sexual activities *contra natura* should be given expression in the same context as a pictorial exposé on witchcraft is entirely

reasonable since witchcraft and sexual deviancy were *heretical* behaviors that contributed to public disorder, issues that were at the forefront of Dominican concerns.[77]

The Saint and the Artist

While Lippi's imaginative conception of Lilith and Adam was undoubtedly nourished by the *Malleus Maleficarum,* we must also acknowledge the implicit influence of St. Thomas Aquinas in this entire scheme. A principal authority for witchcraft theory, Thomas himself was cited repeatedly in the *Malleus* in connection with his ideas on incubi and succubi, demonic copulation, bewitchment by 'fascination' and the like.[78] More to the point, his teachings on marital sex and the sins associated with lust—seduction, adultery, sodomy, homosexuality and bestiality—were the foundation of Dominican orthodoxy and are the very same sexual sins that are invoked in Adam's and Lilith's provocative interplay.[79] This tacit homage to Thomas reflects his importance in Dominican ideology—and in the church and convent of Santa Maria Novella where the saint himself was depicted in several locations within the complex.[80]

In the Strozzi Chapel, the strong Thomist bent of the Adam–Lilith seduction scene helps to affirm the Dominicans' role in shaping the iconography, but it is also appropriate to consider the part played by Filippino Lippi in bringing this illustrative exposition to fruition. Like Ficino, Lippi operated in the same elite circle surrounding Lorenzo de' Medici, where he would presumably have been exposed to the contemporary interest in Cabalistic studies. Similarly, he must have gained some knowledge of the teachings of St. Thomas after painting frescoes in the chapel of Cardinal Carafa, a "fervent Thomist."[81] Lippi was also clearly caught up in the period fascination with witches, evidenced by his drawing of two witches tending a fire.[82] More importantly, a painting he produced in the pivotal period *c.* 1484–90 hints at his awareness of some of the more sophisticated theories surrounding witchcraft and demonology.

The *Vision of St. Bernard* (Figure 3.6) illustrates a story made popular in the *Golden Legend* in which the Virgin miraculously appeared to the saint as he sat writing at a lectern.[83] Lippi sets the figures in a rocky landscape, while behind Bernard at the far right and in a darkened crevice of the rock face, he shows a fanciful demon gnawing at his chains. Although it appears

that Lippi has taken liberties with Bernard's attribute—typically shown as a chained *dragon* (to symbolize heresy)—the demon here may actually represent the incubus Bernard expelled from a possessed woman, a separate episode in the legend of the saint's life.[84] As in the Adam–Lilith fresco the timeline has been condensed, but Lippi has innovated further by including an *owl* by the demon's side, its sharpened talons marking it as a *strige*. The conspicuous linkage of the *strige/strega* with the demon/incubus may serve to illustrate the theological concept such as advanced by St. Thomas and recounted in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, which contended that demons, long thought to exist only as vapors, were able to assume corporeal form in order to have sex with witches.[85] A gratuitous addition to the composition, the specific pairing of the demon and owl suggests that Lippi may already have become familiar with the witchcraft treatise, even before he turned his attention to articulating the Dominican vision in the Strozzi Chapel temptation scene.

Figure 3.6 Filippino Lippi, *Vision of St. Bernard, c.* 1485–90, oil on panel, 210 cm × 195 cm. Badia Fiorentina, Florence.

Photo: Scala / Art Resource, New York.

Dominicans as/and Audience

Appearing in the sanctified space of the church of Santa Maria Novella, the moralistic messages embedded in Lippi's vignette would have had special authoritative resonance for the male and female congregants. But the warnings invoked by the Adam–Lilith exchange were equally applicable to

the resident brothers themselves. Dominican regulatory writings reinforced the importance of celibacy, with friars cautioned not to "fix [their] eye" on any woman, lest they succumb to the "sin of the flesh."[86] Friars were also instructed to "sleep in their tunics and stockings, with their belts fastened," a rule no doubt intended to stymie sexual urges—and to ward off succubi, notorious for inflicting themselves upon men of the cloth as they slept, causing them nocturnal emissions.[87] As well as prompting the friars to be ever vigilant against carnal temptations, Lippi's seduction scenario would have duly reminded them that their own St. Thomas Aquinas had similarly been tested by lustful desire. After being locked in a room with a prostitute, Thomas had prayed for the Virgin's intercession; he was rewarded with the girdle of perpetual chastity which gave him the power to overcome his sexual dilemma. This very event is recounted in the *Malleus Maleficarum,* but in the fresco, Lippi again pays subtle homage to St. Thomas by dressing Adam in an ox skin, surely a nod to Thomas's nickname as the "Dumb Ox."[88] In this bold scene of sexual desire, the invocation of St. Thomas—the patron saint of chastity—served to remind the good friars of Santa Maria Novella that holding fast against the lures of unbridled women was central to their religious vows and their personal redemption.

Of course, abstention from sex also implied a proscription against sodomy and homosexuality. The Florentines were notorious for both, with the clergy repeatedly denounced for engaging in homoerotic activities.[89] So widespread had sodomy become that during the 1490s the city took more active steps to root out this kind of sexual corruption.[90] Leading the charge was Girolamo Savonarola, whose efforts were backed by the preachers of Santa Maria Novella predicting dire consequences for Florence if the practice were not curtailed.[91] For the Dominican brothers, whose stated mission was combatting heresy and saving souls, fighting against witchcraft and debased sexual conduct—the very acts that threatened the good of society and the salvation of mankind—was paramount. But while such immoral activities could be denounced in fiery rhetoric, their visual expression in the sanctified space of a family chapel required a bit more delicacy. Herein lies the inventiveness behind Lippi's portrayal of Adam and Lilith engaged in a battle of sexual wills.

A popular theory of preaching having special currency with the mendicant community held that Scriptures could be interpreted in four ways, i.e. in a literal (historical), allegorical, moral, and anagogical sense.[92]

This same interpretative methodology can be used to explain the multivalent thrust of Lippi's provocative rendering of Adam and Lilith. Playing their respective roles in the biblical, Cabalistic and even hagiological accounts, each figure assumes a symbolic function, leaving the viewer to contemplate the moral implications of succumbing to carnal desire. Ultimately, however subtly conveyed, this patent illustration could not have had more relevant and serious applications for notions of the afterlife. In one of the most important churches of the Order, Filippino Lippi's carefully nuanced illustration of carnal desire and conflicted sexual identity thus serves as an understated but nevertheless powerful assertion of Dominican propaganda.

Acknowledgment

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Notes

1 Giustiniani (1389–1446) was a Venetian patrician who gained early renown for his ribald love poetry written in the Venetian vernacular; he later turned to devotional and spiritual writing and the composition of *laude*. See D'Elia (2002).

2 *Oratio ad Inducendum Stomachum de Mulieribus*, British Library, MS 26784, fol. 29r; quoted with Latin original in D'Elia (2002, 402).

3 Tertullian and Jerome, among others, railed against women using their cosmetic adornments to entice men, with Tertullian referring to Eve as the "Devil's Gateway." Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius made an etymological connection between Eve and the snake of Bacchic revelries, an analogy that eventually led to their conflation. See for example Upson-Saia (2011, 46–8), Kvam *et al.* (1999, 131–3), Warner (2013, 59), and Sale (1976, 197).

4 As Sale (1976, 193) observes, Lippi's rendering "conforms to no single narrative instant described in the Bible." Roettgen (1997, 234) interprets the scene as "an abbreviated depiction of the Fall," and Friedman (1970, 116) indicates that it is "after the Expulsion."

5 Genesis 3:20–23.

6 Sale acknowledges the serpent's role in tempting Adam, but interprets the seduction as a spiritual dilemma for "Adam-everyman"; Sale (1976, 196–200). Roettgen (1997, 234) sees the serpent as a "stage prop" for Adam, while Friedman (1970) does not even acknowledge the serpent's role in the pictorial scheme.

7 In his analysis, Sale (1976) emphasizes the salvation subtext of the chapel iconography.

8 Roettgen (1997, 234) notes that Adam was not typically included among the patriarchs; she also follows Sale (1976, 202) in his interpretation of the symbolism conveyed by Adam's action.

9 Still in place in the fifteenth century, the *ponte* was a large rood screen that divided the nave from the transept and kept the friars out of view of the congregation.

10 Sale (1976, 199), for example, suggests that Lippi excluded Eve from the scene to be "economical," an idea mirrored by Phillips (1984, 68), who allows that Eve "is present only in, or as, the serpent." On the other hand, Roettgen (1997, 234) makes no mention of Eve.

11 See Bonnell (1917). The original Latin reads: "Elegit etiam quoddam genus serpentis . . . virgineum similia similibus applaudant"; Peter Comestor, *Historia Scholastica* 1.21, quoted in Kelly (1971, 308).

12 For fuller discussion on Lilith, see Blair (2009, 24–30), Patai (1981), Tuttle (1985) and Cashio (1994).

13 A concise yet comprehensive discussion of Lilith's roots is contained in Toorn *et al.* (1995, 973–6). Blair (2009, 30) discounts a Lilith reading of the Scriptures, arguing that the passage actually refers to the plural *lilim* (demon spirits).

14 Toorn *et al.* (1995, 974).

15 Jerome: "Lamia, who is called Lilith in Hebrew" (et lamiam quae Hebraiae dicitur *Lilith*); in Toorn *et al.* (1995, 973). By 1521, "lamia" was conflated with *strix* (Latin "screech owl") and *strega* (Italian for "witch") in the Dominican Silvestro Mazzolini's *De strigimagarum demonumque mirandus* (*On the Wonders of the Witch-Sorceresses and Demons*); see Tal (2006, 191).

16 *Zohar, Sitre Tora*, 1:148a–b; cited in Patai (1981, 461). Patai has compiled the various references to Lilith into one comprehensive text, but individual excerpts are contained in *Zohar* (2004–11).

17 Aside from the *Zohar,* an extensive account of Lilith's nefarious activities was recorded in the *Alphabet of Ben-Sira,* a tenth-century midrashim (a rabbinical commentary on the Hebrew scriptures). See the discussion in Tuttle (1985, 123–4), who notes that such writings were of special interest to Christians in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Hoffeld (1968) examines these texts as they relate to the depiction of Lilith in medieval art.

18 While Lilith was reputed to kill both girls and boys, she seems to have exhibited a preference for the latter, as suggested in *Zohar* (2004–11, 3:76b–77a), cited in Patai (1981, 466).

19 *Zohar, Sitre Tora*, 1:148a–b; cited in Patai (1981, 461).

20 In Italian Renaissance imagery, when Eve is shown with her offspring, she is often portrayed as a nurturing mother. Sometimes she holds two babies, and at other times she is accompanied by two small children, one of whom she may be carrying or nursing.

21 For example, Schuyler (1990) has shown that Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling iconography (1508–12) was indebted to Cabalistic sources and that the female serpent in his Fall of Man fresco represents Lilith.

22 Idel (1998) discusses the prominent Jewish thinkers in late Quattrocento Florence vis-à-vis their studies of Cabbala and 'natural magic' and their influence on Pico (especially) and Ficino. See also Tuttle (1985, 124–5).

23 On Ficino's astrological input on the palace construction, see Goldthwaite (1980, 85). The musical symbolism of the chapel is addressed by Winternitz (1967, 180).

24 "There is a certain common and ancient opinion that certain wise old women [*aniculas quasdam sagas*] who are popularly called 'screech owls' [*strigis* or *strix*] suck the blood of infants as a means insofar as they can, of growing young again." Ficino's reference appears in his chapter advocating the "Use of Human Milk and Blood for the Life of Old People." See Ficino (1989, 198–9).

25 Ficino was friends with the Dominicans Girolamo Savonarola (until 1494) and Donato Acciaiuoli, who was himself closely allied with Giovanni Caroli, conventional prior of Santa Maria Novella. Pico was a long-standing friend of Savonarola and took the Dominican habit shortly before his death that same year; Savonarola was with him when he died and gave his funeral oration.

26 Sale (1976, 2), puts this best when he observes that the chapel program was "conceived in a scholarly atmosphere in which secret knowledge and hidden truth were more highly prized than direct statement."

27 See Borsook (1970).

28 On Lippi and the Carafa Chapel, see Geiger (1986), Nelson (2004a), Roettgen (1997, 202–29) and Friedman (1970, 118–19).

29 See Roettgen (1997, 205).

30 Parenti (1421–97) was proficient in Latin and philosophy and was well regarded by humanist contemporaries including Acciaiuoli, who was Ficino's student. Given his involvement with Strozzi's earlier projects, Sale (1976, 36) suggests that he would have continued in this advisory role.

31 This accords with the fact that despite Strozzi having dedicated his chapel to St. Philip and St. James, the latter was replaced in the iconography with St. John the Evangelist, probably at the Dominicans' behest; see Roettgen (1997, 233). Cole (1983, 51) also notes that in general, while religious authorities would have had to approve decorative programs for chapels, they "probably also had a say in the choice of subject."

32 On Santa Maria Novella, see Borsook (1997, 117–18).

33 Borsook (1997, 117). For more on the Order, see especially Hood (1993, 18–22).

34 Corbari (2013, esp. 6–10) provides a definition and discussion of 'vernacular theology.' A cogent example of how this methodology was expressed in imagery is seen in the fourteenth-century Strozzi Chapel (also in Santa Maria Novella), whose iconography was based on Dante's *Divinia Commedia;* see Hood (1993, 139).

35 Welch (1997, 220). According to Stephens (2002, 89), the Dominicans made sure that the "common people were exposed to orthodox dogma in their own language."

36 See Lesnick (1990).

37 As Brauner (1995, 41) has shown, the Dominicans were traditionally charged with ministering and providing marital advice to women.

38 This is consistent with Hood's observation that imagery made for audiences of Dominican friars was rarely narrative in character, but was "consonant with their analytical, dialectical modes of discourse," Hood (1993, 21).

39 On Florentine modes of behavior, see Tinagli (2000) and Rocke (1998, 151). More general writings on women's comportment in the Renaissance are included in the essay collection edited by Panizza (2000)—e.g. Knox (2000), Zarri (2000) and Ajmar (2000).

40 This facet of appearance makes Lilith immediately suspect, since Florentine girls were married off in their teens; those that were not had their virtue (i.e. virginity) questioned; Rocke (1998, 151–2).

41 Bernardino da Siena (1934–40, vol. 4, 129), cf. Origo (1962, 68). Randolph (1997, esp. 35–40) discusses the fuller ramifications of women's gaze.

42 Here San Bernardino was quoting Jeremiah 3:3; Bernardino da Siena (1950–65, vol. 3, 75), cited in Hughes (1986, 24).

43 This gratuitous display also bears on connotations of the "extremely bad" breast in direct contrast with the "extremely perfect" (lactating) breasts of the Virgin Mary and the figure of Charity (seen directly below on the window wall). Miles (2008, 53) assigns these values in relation to the breast.

44 Baxandall (1972, 68). For example, guidance contained in treatises such as the *Decor puellarum* (Venice, 1471) advised resting the right hand on the left, with both hands placed out in front, at the level of the girdle. See Baxandall (1972, 68–70).

45 Hughes (1986, 26, note 74). Moreover, as Hughes (1986, 26) observes, both San Bernardino and Giovanni da Capistrano viewed trains as a sign of bestiality—which lends further significance to Lilith's *coda* (discussed below).

46 The Florentine audience would have looked at figures' gestures, postures and facial expressions as a reflection of their inner soul; see Manca (2001).

47 Davis (1975, 124–51) examines the "woman on top" *topos*.

48 Abridged quotation in Matthews-Grieco (1997). The operative lines in Italian ("Voglion le donne diventar mariti, / Cercan portar le brache, e dominare; / La povera virtù quasi è dispersa, / Perché 'l mondo va tutto riversa") appear in their entirety in the song entitled "Mascherata del mondo, che va alla riversa"; see Bracci and Grazzini (1750, 531–3).

49 Popular at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries, the 'power of woman' topos was expressed in literature and the fine arts and typically focused on women's use of their sexual wiles to triumph over men. See Russell and Barnes (1990, 13). Johnson (1997, 231–2) examines this phenomenon as it relates to concern over public statues of "potentially dangerous women" that "visually disrupted the partriarchal order."

50 In the case of Charity shown nursing a baby, she serves as the antithesis of Lilith, who had no milk in her breasts according to Talmudic legend; on this point, see Patai (1990, 222).

51 In the Vulgate version, "et sub viri potestate eris, et ipse dominabitur tui."

52 Matthews-Grieco (1992) discusses these sexual metaphors.

53 Kramer and Sprenger (1971, xliii). Although Jacob Sprenger's name has also been linked to the authorship of the *Malleus*, scholars now generally agree that it was the work of Kramer. The pope's bull, the *Summis desiderantes affectibus*, was originally issued in 1484. A recent translation of and commentary on the *Malleus* is available in Kramer and Sprenger (2009).

54 The *Malleus* was a fusion of popular beliefs from the northern countries and from Tuscany. Kramer had spent much time in Italy and was obviously exposed to local superstition. Stephens (2002) discusses the work of previous Dominican writers on witchcraft and the issues surrounding ideas on demonology.

55 According to Broedel (2003, 20), the text was used "to provide arguments, *exempla,* and advice for preachers who had to deal with witchcraft on a pastoral level." Brauner (1995, 43) comments on the dialectic bent of the treatise, noting that it demonized women's behaviors, while "male behaviors (such as surrendering to the charms of a woman) . . . served by negative example to teach men to dominate women."

56 For example, the *Malleus* accuses witches of causing impotence (Part I, Question VIII), killing children (Part I, Question XI) and engaging in sex with the devil (Part I, Question VI); it also expounds on witches' insatiable sexuality (Part I, Question VI), and their fabrication of demon babies using semen collected from the conjugal act (Part I, Question III). Similarly, several of the author's premises are mirrored in the Talmud (which also mentioned Lilith); see Baroja (1964, 79).

57 On the Dominicans' erudition and training, see discussion in Hood (1993, 19–20). Because of their scholarly reputation, the Pope traditionally appointed a Dominican as his official theologian, which helps to explain the appearance of Lilith in the Sistine Chapel iconography (see note 21 above).

58 The subtext of the Adam–Lilith temptation scene is also expressed in the *Malleus's* chapter (Part I, Question VII) in the section entitled "The Method of Preaching to the People about Infatuate Love," in which the author refers to a witch's bewitchment of a married man; in Kramer and Sprenger (1971, 51).

59 Following St. Thomas Aquinas, the *Malleus* alleged that succubi copulated with men to get their semen, and then as incubi, they fornicated with witches, injecting the semen into their bodies to impregnate them (*Malleus Maleficarum*, Part I, Question III).

60 See Stephens's discussion on how the *Malleus* explains the begetting of demon babies; Stephens (2002, esp. 71–2). On red hair and witches, see Guiley (1999, 277). From a Cabalistic reading, the child may have represented Cain. The *Zohar* (1:37a) records that Satan "mounted Eve, he injected filth into her, and she conceived and bare Cain"; quoted in Patai (1981, 471). Moreover, like Lilith, witches were said to turn upon their own children—another reason for the child's fearful demeanor in Lippi's painting.

61 Kramer and Sprenger (2009, 23–4) and Anglo (1977, esp. 15–18).

62 This penis that emerges from the tree trunk seems to provide the answer to Part I, Question IX of the *Malleus,* which asks "Whether Witches may work some Prestidigitatory Illusion so that the Male Organ appears to be entirely removed and separate from the Body"; Kramer and Sprenger (1971, 58).

63 Miles (1989, 142–4) discusses male bodies and virility.

64 Adam's "appearance was green, and all those spirits surrounded him" (*Zohar* 3:19a), quoted in Patai (1981, 455).

65 See the discussion in Elliot (1999, 155). The issue of fascination (glamour) is treated in the *Malleus Maleficarum* in various sections, including Part I, Question 2: Kramer and Sprenger (1971, 17), Kramer and Sprenger (2009, 113), and elsewhere. Part I, Question 7 addresses the man's role in the equation; Kramer and Sprenger (1971, 48–51) and Kramer (2009, 177–80).

66 On the coda–penis metaphor, see e.g. Toscan (1981, vol. 4, 1680).

67 For Renaissance ideas on the active/passive sexual roles, see Ruggiero (2007, 26–7) and Rocke (1996, esp. 101–11).

68 This runs counter to the assertion by Herzig (2003, 53) that sodomy and witchcraft "were not perceived as related practices." According to Woodbridge (2002, 444), "the charge of 'sodomy' was leveled at same-sex lovers, heretics, and witches."

69 Broedel (2002, 140) indicates that witches forced their victims "into a complementary 'feminine role'."

70 Bernardino da Siena (1989, vol. 2, 1154). Bernardino's pronouncement follows Augustine's words on sodomy as being nothing less than murder. See Mormando (1999, 129).

71 There are also obvious linguistic similarities between the Italian *strige* (screech owl) and *strega* (witch). It can hardly be a coincidence that Angelo Poliziano, who was first implicated for sodomy in 1492, gave a lecture that same year in which he described those who had criticized his academic credentials as "lamias," later referring to them as "conceited owls." We may take from Poliziano's usage that he was aware of contemporary ideas about Lilith and witchcraft—knowledge gained perhaps from his membership of Lorenzo de' Medici's Academy along with Ficino and Pico. On this lecture, see Poliziano (1986).

72 On this idea, see Ruggiero (2007, 26–7), Rocke (1996, 101–3) and Rocke (1998, 168). Anal intercourse was used as a method of birth control.

73 Rocke (1996, 101–3).

74 Lochrie (1999) discusses the implications of sodomy as both a feminine and feminizing act. Sodomitic activity also entailed fellatio, as well as "simulation of intercourse between the thighs," according to Rocke (1996, 91), which may add another meaning to the hoe nestled between Adam's legs.

75 Peaches originally came from Persia and the Middle East, lands associated in the Renaissance *mentalité* with sodomy, hence the pejorative connotations; see Ruggiero (2006).

76 See note 45 above.

77 As Ferzoco (2004, 81) observes, in Renaissance Tuscany the image of "sodomy was repeatedly connected with sin and public disorder [and] routinely attributed to those considered to be

heretics." In Lippi's fresco, there may have also been a more personal political dimension to this allusion to sodomy, for in 1496 Savonarola had accused Alfonso Strozzi (who had been extremely critical of the friar) of that very act. See Rocke (1996, 219).

78 Thomas figures prominently especially in Part I of the *Malleus*; see Mackay in Kramer (2009, vol. 1, 16), who notes that a large majority of the citations are attributed to him.

79 On his enumeration of these sexual sins, see Grabowski (2003, 81).

80 For example, St. Thomas is depicted in a stained glass window in the Tornabuoni Chapel (adjacent to the Strozzi Chapel); in an altarpiece by Andrea Orcagna in the fourteenth-century Strozzi Chapel; and in the Spanish Chapel of the Chiostro Verde. In the seventeenth century, Thomas was represented in a lunette over the front portal of the church.

81 Roettgen (1997, 202) refers to Carafa as a "fervent Thomist," an assessment that finds support in the chapel program, which displays an unusual emphasis on Dominican doctrinal issues. On this latter point, see Geiger (1986, 50). Moreover, as Rowlands and Bradshaw (2017) have observed, Lippi's unique skill was "translat[ing] erudite Dominican doctrine into lively tangible form."

82 The undated drawing exists in a copy housed in the Uffizi's Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe (inv. 203 E).

83 On this painting, see Clark (1981–2), Nelson (2004b) and Burke (2004, 139–49).

84 Bernard's attribute is discussed in Hall (1979, 46).

85 See Stephens (1998, 508). Thomas's ideas were elaborated in his *Summa theologiae* and other texts.

86 Chapter 17 of the Constitution of the Order of Friars Preachers identifies as a "grave fault . . . anyone going to a place where women are present [and] fix[ing] his eye," while Chapter 18 under the heading of "very grave faults" states that "if, God forbid, anyone falls into a sin of the flesh . . . he is to be imprisoned"; quoted in Hood (1993, 293–4).

87 From the Constitution, Chapter 9; quoted in Hood, (1993, 292). The *Zohar*, 1:19b; Patai (1981, 461) refers to *succubi* attaching themselves to men during their sleep. According to Walker (1983, 542) "celibate monks tried to fend off [succubi] by sleeping with their hands crossed over their genitals, holding a crucifix."

88 Part II, Question I; Kramer and Sprenger (1971, 94).

89 In 1470, the "Office of the Night," the Florentine institution in charge of policing sodomy, wrote to the Archbishop of Florence asking him to intercede since their earlier complaints to the archbishop's representative had been ignored; Rocke (1996, 138–9). Ten years earlier, having heard "innumerable things about the depraved life and customs of the friars" of Santa Maria Novella, Pope Pius II complained directly to the Signoria; see Rubinstein (1990, 63–82).

90 Rocke (1996, 201–26) gives an extensive discussion of "the tightening of controls over sodomy" that followed Lorenzo de' Medici's death in April 1492 and the rise of Savonarola's power base. Under Savonarola, sodomy became a capital crime.

91 Rocke (1996, 201).

92 The more immediate source for the Dominicans may have been an *Ars Praedicandi* tractate allegedly inspired by Thomas's ideas; see Caplan (1929).

4 Mirror Effects

The Narcissus Emblem in Scève's *Délie*

Nancy M. Frelick

L X.

Si c'eſt Amour, pourquoy m'occit il dõcques,
Qui tant aymay, & onq ne ſceuz hair?
Ie ne m'en puis non aſſes esbahir,
Et meſmement que ne l'offençay oncques:
Mais ſouffre encor, sãs cõplainctes quelcõques,
Qu'il me conſume, ainſi qu'au feu la Cyre.
Et me tuant, a viure il me deſire,
Affin qu'aymant aultruy, ie me deſayme.
Qu'eſt il beſoing de plus oultre m'occire,
Veu qu'aſſes meurt, qui trop vainement ayme?

L X I.

Plus librement, certes, i'accuſerois
Le tien vers moy & froid, & lent courage:
Si le deuoir duquel i'abuſerois,
Ne te fuſt honte, & a moy grand'oultrage
Car la ferueur d'vne ſi doulce rage
Suſpend

Figure 4.1 Maurice Scève, *Délie, object de plus haulte vertu* (Lyon: S. Sabon, 1544), p. 31, Emblem 7: *Narcissus*, anonymous woodcut, with

motto ASSES MEVRT QVI EN VAIN AYME ("[he] dies enough who in vain loves"), and accompanying dizain LX. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, RES-YE-1746.

The image of Narcissus evokes a whole nexus of allusions in early modern poetry and art. Among other things, it alludes to vanity and the dangers of *philautia* or self-love.[1] The youth gazing longingly at his reflection is a tragic exemplar of misrecognition and impossible desire, for Narcissus does not initially recognize the unattainable love object he sees in the silvery waters as his own mirror image. The reflecting pond in which he catches a tantalizing glimpse of his shadowy self is suggestive of questions related to the dangers of 'love's fatal glance' and the illusory nature of human perception.[2] This myth is also related to issues concerning mimesis and representation, as well as the dangers of reading and misreading.[3] It is a story about identity and difference, as well as sexuality and what Judith Butler calls 'gender trouble' or the illusion of stable gender identities, which are constructed or performative and open to interpretation.[4] This is true not only in terms of relations between self (and self) and other (between Narcissus and his image, or between Narcissus and Echo, for example), but also in the story of Tiresias, which is given as a kind of narrative pre-text in the Ovidian myth and which both affirms and destabilizes gender categories. Indeed, one might say not only that such elements of the story betray a certain anxiety with respect to masculinity and femininity, but that the various metamorphoses in the narrative that portray alienation and the dissolution, transformation, or shifting boundaries of the body or the self reveal fundamental uncertainties with regard to the stability of any kind of identity.

Here is a synopsis of the story of Narcissus in the *Metamorphoses* (III, vv. 316–510).[5] According to Ovid's narrative, Tiresias saw two snakes mating and struck them with a staff. As a result, he was transformed into a woman. After seven years, Tiresias saw the serpents once more. He was changed back to his former state when he hit them again. He was then asked to arbitrate a spirited dispute between Jove and Juno about who enjoyed sex more, men or women, since he had experienced both sides. Tiresias sided with Jove, who contended that women's pleasure is greater. Juno was inordinately upset by this and blinded Tiresias. Jove could not undo the curse but gave him the gift of prophecy as compensation. Tiresias then

became famous as the blind seer who predicted the fate of Narcissus (son of the river god Cephisus and the water nymph Liriope), foretelling that the child would live to a ripe old age if he never knew himself ("si se non noverit"). These words seemed hollow until the youth's sixteenth year, when the prophet's utterance came true through Narcissus's strange infatuation and death, which are then recounted. The youth is characterized as beautiful, but proud and cold. He spurns the nymph Echo, who could only repeat the last syllables of words uttered by others (as the result of a punishment from Juno for Echo's cunning concealment of Jove's infidelities by distracting her through chatter). Echo's grief at being rejected causes her to wander in the woods and waste away until her bones turn to stone, so that all that remains is her voice. Narcissus mocks others too, both male and female, until a scorned youth prays to Nemesis (*Rhamnusia*) for retribution: "sic amet ipse licet, sic non potiatur amato! (III, v. 405: "So may he himself love, and not gain the thing he loves!"). The goddess hears this prayer and punishes Narcissus by having him come upon a silvery pool where no man or animal had ever been. As he drinks from the spring, he is smitten by the beauty of the form he sees in the still waters, so that instead of slaking his thirst, another thirst—an unquenchable desire for an insubstantial shadow—springs up in him. He burns with love and does not know at first that he is the object of his own desire. Yet his efforts to grasp what he sees in the water are in vain and he eventually realizes that it is his own image that has caused his longing: "iste ego sum: sensi, nec me mea fallit imago; / uror amore mei: flammas moveoque feroque" (III, vv. 463–4: "Oh, I am he! I have felt it, I know now my own image. I burn with love of my own self; I both kindle the flames and suffer them"). Aggrieved, he wastes away as he is consumed by love's hidden fire, like wax melting in the heat. His last words before his final farewell underscore the vanity of his love: "heu frustra dilecte puer!" (III, v. 500: "Alas, dear boy, vainly beloved!"). We are told that even after death, he continues to gaze at his image in the infernal Stygian pool. His body is never found: in its place is a white flower with a yellow center. The narrator tells us that it was the circulation of this story that spread the fame of the blind seer Tiresias.

In this contribution, I shall explore various aspects of the paradoxical portrayal of the Ovidian youth in the seventh emblem and accompanying poem (*Dizain* 60) of Maurice Scève's *Délie, objct de plus haulte vertu* (1544), which underscore not only the vanity of the Lover's desire—the

emblem's motto says "ASSES MEVRT QVI EN VAIN AYME" ("[he] dies enough who in vain loves") —, but also the oscillation, reversibility and *dédoublement* of the poetic "I" (or ubiquitous Delian 'eye') who sometimes appears to be con-fused with the other/Other in the text and who seems to be depicted both as Narcissus and as a kind of "anti-Narcisse" in Emblem 7 and *Dizain* 60.[6] Even though Narcissus is never directly named in the *Délie* (except in the list of emblems titled "L'Ordre des Figures et Emblemes" at the end of the volume), the comparison (and its attendant denial) adds to the layers of 'undecidability' in this difficult work. According to Jane Gilbert, strategies of affirmation and denial with respect to the identification of the lyric lover with Narcissus turns a poetic subject into one who both *is* and *is not* Narcissan.[7] Thus, while we are implicitly invited "to search in Ovid's direction to seek his hidden, unnamed identity," as Deborah Lesko Baker proposes, we are also invited to ask in what ways the poetic subject is or is not Narcissan.[8] And what does it mean to be (anti-)Narcissan? Is the (feminized?) poetic persona not also identified with Echo in some of Scève's poems? How do these associations relate to questions of sexuality and gender? Can psychoanalytic criticism help in our exploration of these issues? Do these references to Narcissus and Echo have more to do with gendered concepts of sexuality and desire or with representations of the visual and verbal dimensions of the work? Can these be said to correspond roughly with the Lacanian Imaginary and Symbolic, for example? Or do they somehow serve as reflections of the reader's desire?

While there are varying opinions on the relative importance and significance of the emblems in the *Délie* and on the complex relationship between text and image in the work—between the 450 poems that express the poetic persona's desire for Délie and the 50 woodcuts that punctuate them at regular intervals in the work, creating an architecture of numerological significance, according to some critics[9] —, it is clear that most readers go back and forth between the visual and verbal dimensions of the work in an attempt to fix meaning. Yet, this is an impossible or unending task, even if we limit ourselves to the seventh emblem and accompanying *dizain*. As we shall see upon closer examination, the image of Narcissus evokes not only a whole web of citations, with echoes throughout the work, but figures and suggestively stages the very problems of reading we confront in this visual and verbal text.

An Introduction to the Study of Scève's Emblems

Maurice Scève's *Délie, object de plus haulte vertu* was first published in Lyons in 1544 "Chez Sulpice Sabon, Pour Antoine Constantin."[10] It is composed of 449 *dizains* (or poems of ten lines, of ten syllables each) preceded by a liminary *huitain* (or eight-line poem) and punctuated by 50 woodcuts. The work is described as "an illustrated love *canzoniere*" by Dorothy Gabe Coleman because it was the first Petrarchist lyric "love cycle in French" published with emblems and because of the function ascribed to the pictures, which she sees as having an immediate impact upon readers and thus functioning as an aid to understanding the poems.[11] Coleman sees the 50 woodcuts interspersed at regular intervals among the 450 poems after the first five *dizains*—creating groupings of nine poems or *neuvaines*—as forming "an integral part of their companion dizains" by completing their meaning "in various ways and varying degrees of convincingness."[12] Functioning as visual metaphors or analogies, these images are seen as helping to 'clinch' arguments or illustrate notions in the poems by providing a sort of shortcut to well-known themes and associations (mythological or otherwise) that would readily have been understood by sixteenth-century readers accustomed to decoding such visual devices.[13]

Coleman's contributions to the study of Scève's woodcuts (which she characterizes as *imprese* or personal devices rather than emblems[14]) are undeniable, yet her argument rests on problematic assumptions. It seems to suggest that we as readers just need to recreate the sixteenth-century viewer's perspective for the meaning of the emblems to immediately become clear, as if all sixteenth-century readers had the same decoding skills, which seems unlikely even if we reduce the readership to a small élite. Her thesis also seems to take for granted that it is possible to recreate the perspective of a reader who existed four centuries earlier. Even if this were possible, how could we truly replicate such a view when we are immersed in other contexts and influenced by our own sets of biases and associations? Another assumption appears to be that the images are easier to understand than the poems, that they thus serve to illustrate and complete the *dizains*, providing a 'shortcut' to understanding and 'clinching' their arguments. This begs the question about the function of the emblems: do these images serve as illustrations of the poems, as Coleman seems to suggest? Or is it the other way around: does the text serve to illustrate

visual enigmas, as Aynard proposes?[15] Or are they unrelated, as Giudici asserts?[16] Are the accompanying *dizains* meant to explain the visual devices (as would seem to be the case in more typical emblem books)? Or is there something more complex at play?

One of the problems with some of Coleman's suppositions in *An Illustrated Love 'Canzoniere'* is that contemporary readers apparently found Scève's poetry particularly difficult and obscure.[17] Coleman recognizes this in her book titled *Maurice Scève: Poet of Love*, where she compares his reception to that of difficult authors of the twentieth century, such as Paul Valéry, James Joyce and Ezra Pound, who also proved challenging for their educated contemporaries. Moreover, she refers to the additional challenges and frustrations for the modern reader trying to comprehend the relevance of Scève's puzzling woodcuts and mottoes, or to understand his *dizains*, which are far from transparent and riddled with such distant associations "as to appear out of reach."[18]

Suggestive as Scève's visual devices might be, one of the difficulties with seeing them as shortcuts to understanding the *Délie* is that pictorial signifiers do not translate into stable signifieds any more readily than verbal ones. Indeed, the dialogic relationship between word and image in the text might be seen to contribute to the proliferation of potential associations and connotations that serve to echo and/or contradict each other (paradoxically or even antiperistatically, at times[19]), contributing to the sense of opacity and undecidability in this visual and verbal text.

The uniqueness of Scève's work (underscored by Coleman, among others) —together with attendant difficulties inherent in categorizing its images or their function—counters the idea that his woodcuts would readily have been understood. Unlike the pictures in emblem books that predate the *Délie*, —books more typical of this new genre, such as the *Emblematum liber* of Andrea Alciato (whose publication inaugurated the tradition in 1531), or Guillaume de La Perrière's *Theatre des bons engins* and Gilles Corrozet's *Hecatomgraphie* (the first vernacular French emblem books, both initially published by Denis Janot in 1540), which all pair images with explanatory verse on moral themes for the edification of readers—, Scève's engravings do not systematically appear to illustrate moral lessons explicated in the accompanying poem.[20] At the same time, Scève's woodcuts are not quite like *imprese* either, because they are not really personal devices such as those linked with heraldry or coats of arms.

Peter M. Daly explains the difference between emblem and *impresa*, cautioning us against easy definitions of either genre. Essentially, the emblem is described as tripartite, comprised of image, motto and explanatory verse.[21] The more personal *impresa*, on the other hand, is categorized as bipartite, with an image and brief motto.[22] The use of woodcuts in the *Délie* corresponds more closely to the tripartite definition of emblems provided by Daly, since they can be seen to combine a picture, a motto inscribed within an ornamental frame (which is sometimes seen as a fourth element), and an epigram that generally bears some dialogic relation to the image and surrounding inscription.[23] To keep things simple, we will thus continue to refer to Scève's woodcuts as 'emblems' (among others), despite the proliferation of more or less nuanced terms used to designate them. For example, Coleman prefers to use the older French spelling of 'emblesmes' to distinguish Scève's use of images from more traditional moralizing or universalizing emblem books—a term she alternates with 'imprese amorose' (or *devises amoureuses*, following Claude-François Menestrier's seventeenth-century classification) in order to highlight the more personalized use of such images in the context of a Petrarchist 'love *canzoniere.*'[24] Indeed, as Giudici suggests, it may be wise to see Scève's woodcuts as partaking of both emblem and *impresa*, or presenting a synthesis of both, without being reducible to either genre or fitting neatly into either category.[25] Liz Guild refers to Scève's woodcuts as 'emblematic devices' in order to keep both terms in play, without excluding either emblem or *devise*, the French term for *impresa*.[26]

As Giudici observes, the singularity and originality of Scève's emblems has to do with the relationship between motto, image and poem.[27] Nonetheless, he concludes his analysis by saying that he sees no intrinsic relationship between the pictures and poems in the *Délie*; nor does he see any particular significance in their order or thematic arrangement.[28] As Coleman and others have pointed out, Giudici's stance is difficult to justify, given the frequent, if oblique, resonances between the emblems, mottoes and accompanying *dizains*, whose last lines reprise the inscription surrounding the image, often with a twist, creating a kind of repetition with a difference (as we shall see with the Narcissus emblem).[29]

Some critics wonder whether the emblems or the poems came first: whether a preexisting stock of images was used as an inspiration for the *dizains* (as Aynard proposes[30]), or whether the images were created

specifically for the work. The fact that images and mottoes are often clearly linked to the *dizain* they precede, not only in terms of theme and imagery, but also through a kind of discursive echo between the emblem's dictum and the last verses of the poem or *pointe*, suggests to critics like Saulnier that the images (which he sees as having a common provenance, perhaps coming from ready-made stock) must have preceded and inspired the work.[31]

Nevertheless, the approach of some literary critics points to what might be called the primacy of the verbal over the visual, of the poems over the emblems, which are sometimes seen as a superfluous supplement by Scève scholars.[32] As Michael Giordano reminds us, such underestimation of the images has led five modern editors to omit them, with little or no explanation.[33] Part of the rationale for this devaluation of the visual aspect of the work appears to relate to the fact that the 'Privilege du Roy' granted to Lyonnais printer and bookseller Antoine Constantin for the first edition of the book was for publication with or without emblems, which some critics view as evidence of their lack of importance. Yet, as Giordano points out, this view obscures the fact that some poems are modeled on the images, which are not just ornamental, but methods of writing and thinking that inevitably join concept and vision, and constitute a kind of "*ars memorativa*, which indirectly draws the work together and enriches the reader's appreciation of thematic patterning and development."[34] Image and text must be read dialogically. In fact, as Charlotte Melançon explains, emblems themselves are already comprised of both text and image, which are of equal import and assembled through a kind of 'montage.'[35] Indeed, we might go so far as to say that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The emblem itself is not only visual; it also contains sayings inscribed within its frame or ornamental surround (*cartouche*) that are generally reprised in the accompanying *dizain* and find reverberations in other places throughout the text. In a detailed stylistic study of the mottoes, Cécile Alduy notes that there is repetition, not only of motifs but also of lexical and syntactic structures in these inscriptions. She finds unity and coherence in the system of *motti*, whose functioning is likened to combinatory models that play on a limited number of terms and syntactic, rhetorical or poetic structures.[36] The mottoes present variations on themes (through similarity and opposition) whose correspondences are linked through formal, poetic and rhetorical processes (versification, rhythm, rhyme, anaphora, antithesis,

etc.) across the work. However, like Giudici, Alduy sees no apparent relation between the image and the text of the poem—the only correspondence she allows for is verbal, between the text of the motto and the text of the poem. Yet, the visual dimension is essential too, as we hope to show through an analysis of the Narcissus emblem. Indeed, as we shall see, it is the image (and title of the emblem given in the list of figures) that clearly establishes the identity of Narcissus as an intertextual figure and invites comparisons with the Ovidian myth.

The Narcissus Emblem

Let us now turn to the seventh emblem of the *Délie* (Figure 4.1), which includes a picture inserted in a rectangular *cartouche* framed with scrollwork and grotesques.[37] The scene evokes a sort of sylvan glade, with the image of a youth lying prone, contemplating his reflection in a pond shaded by a couple of trees, as his hound looks on indulgently with half-hooded eyes. No doubt this is Narcissus resting from the hunt, as is the case in the narrative of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (III, 413), and as is suggested by the youth's clothing along with the presence of the hunting dog in the emblem.[38] The motto "ASSES MEVRT QVI EN VAIN AYME" ("[he] dies enough who in vain loves") surrounds the image and is echoed by the last line of the accompanying *dizain*, which is directly below the emblem in the original edition (Figure 4.1). The ironic question (or *pointe*) of the epigram asks: "Wherefore slay me more, since he dies enough, who too vainly loves?" In this 'companion dizain,' which immediately follows the emblem and plays on interesting paradoxes and reversals, Scève's Poet–Lover implies that he is nothing like Narcissus (at least before his arrival at the silvery pool): "If this be Love, why then does he slay me, / who have so loved and never knew (how to) hate?"[39]

> Si c'est Amour, pourquoy m'occit il doncques,
> Qui tant aymay, et onq ne sceuz hair?
> Je ne m'en puis non asses esbahir,
> Et mesmement que ne l'offençay oncques:
> Mais souffre encor, sans complainctes quelconques,
> Qu'il me consume, ainsi qu'au feu la Cyre.
> Et me tuant, à vivre il me desire,
> Affin qu'aymant aultruy, je me desayme.
> Qu'est il besoing de plus oultre m'occire,
> Veu qu'asses meurt, qui trop vainement ayme?[40]

The poetic persona insists that he has done nothing to offend "Amours." Why then is he being punished?

It is important to remember that the specular scene in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is staged by the goddess Nemesis to punish Narcissus for having spurned so many admirers.[41] The Latin poet describes the uncanny *locus amoenus* (that soon turns into a kind of *locus horridus*), in terms that stress its unsettling qualities through negation: it is so remote, so isolated, so exceptional that no human or animal has ever used the silvery spring for refreshment, no bird or beast has ever disturbed its smooth surface; even the sun could not reach it. The site chosen by the goddess for the youth's punishment is a kind of reflection of his aloofness and unattainability thus far.[42] The mirror scene in the reflective pool where he sees his likeness (without realizing at first that it is his own image) answers the "righteous prayer" of a scorned youth and fulfills the prophecy of Tiresias that Narcissus will have a long life, if he never knows himself: "si se non noverit" (III, 348). It also causes a kind of chiasmic reversal. Indeed, instead of satisfying the youth's thirst for refreshment (water), drinking from the spring gives rise to another thirst (desire) that proves unquenchable. No longer cold and detached, Narcissus now longs for contact with another, who proves as inaccessible as he had been to Echo and others, such as the youth who prayed to Nemesis for just retribution: "sic amet ipse licet, sic non potiatur amato!"—"So may he himself love, and not gain the thing he loves!" (III, 405).

So how can Scève's poetic persona be punished (like Narcissus) when he so loves another and (unlike Narcissus) *unloves* himself (as he states in line 8 of *Dizain* 60)?[43] An initial reading suggests that it is only in this sense that he is a kind of "anti-Narcisse" (as Mathieu-Castellani puts it), for the Scèvian Poet–Lover lacks the *dura superbia*, the cold pride and callous indifference to others that caused Nemesis to punish the Ovidian youth by awakening in him the kind of unquenchable thirst or longing he incited in those who saw him and whom he mocked and reviled in the first part of the story.[44] Indeed, there appears to be a kind of gender inversion here, as it is Délie, the object of desire, who seems to have more in common with the cold and inaccessible Ovidian hero before the mirror scene, while Scève's poetic persona more closely resembles Echo, who "stands in for all the lovers that Narcissus left 'unanswered.'"[45] Like *Délie*'s Poet–Lover, Echo not only loves an unattainable other, but struggles with self-expression and

wastes away with desire and longing for one who rebuffs her.[46] All that is left is a voice that repeats the words of others—though, in fact, in the course of Ovid's narrative, both Echo and Narcissus struggle with signifiers and fail to get the responses they want from the beloved (Echo from Narcissus and Narcissus from the beautiful form he sees reflected in the pond). The failed dialogs created through echo effects in Ovid's text show the way otherness inhabits language, diffracting speech "into a potentiality of alternative meanings" and putting the very notion of the subject ('selfhood') into question.[47]

If Scève's Poet–Lover also resembles the Ovidian youth, it is only after Narcissus's encounter with his reflection, when he too loves in vain, longing for an "eternally inaccessible other."[48] As Baker explains, the Ovidian confrontation with misrecognition, desire and otherness informs the situation of the Poet–Lover throughout the *Délie*:

> Narcissus's first encounter with his own specular image is a point of rupture comparable to the Lady's visual penetration of the lover, the event beginning the *Délie* and reinvoked periodically as an iterative shock. But it is not only the Ovidian moment of simple visual encounter that is displaced to the starting point of the *Délie.* Ovid's visual encounter is followed by a rich and lengthy reflective monologue in which Narcissus gropes for an understanding of his traumatic experience. The quest for this understanding ultimately leads him to recognize the object of his visual infatuation as himself. Indeed, this principal articulation of the Ovidian setting – the moment when Narcissus recognizes as himself what he had originally perceived as pure otherness . . . – is contained implicitly even in the dramatic opening dizain of the volume. . . . the actual grasp on the rupturing experience *in terms of its relation to the self* undergoes a striking compression vis-à-vis Ovid's version: it takes place almost immediately in Scève's poetic itinerary. . .[49]

The Narcissan lover loses his self-sufficiency, like the Lacanian subject encountering his image in the mirror stage. The encounter with the specular Other signals the entry into the Imaginary and Symbolic realms that constitute different types of identification, misrecognition (or *méconnaissance*), and alienation.[50] The Imaginary is linked with the imaginary capture of the subject in the illusory visual realm (which is also the binary world of the identification and misrecognition of self and other associated with love and represented by metaphoric relations), while the Symbolic constitutes the world of language, subjectivity and social relations (ruled by an Other that disrupts binary correspondences or illusions of plenitude by introducing a destabilizing third term linked with desire and metonymic slippage). It is important to remember that if Narcissus eventually comes to recognize the reflection in the pond as his own, he

initially mistakes this image or simulacrum ("imagines umbra est") for an actual other (or Other) through a series of errors or 'misreadings,' for he cannot differentiate between *umbra* or *imago* and *corpus*.[51] He initially construes the reflection's movements as reciprocal responses to his amorous looks and gestures on the visual level, just as he had failed to identify his own voice and interpreted Echo's repetitions on the aural plane (her *imago vocis*) as replies to his entreaties earlier in the story.[52] As Philip Hardie explains, "In Lacanian terms Narcissus is deluded by a specular correspondence that offers the hope of a total merging of his own self in the self of the Other, and of the unmediated recognition of his self by the Other."[53] Yet such merging proves an illusion. Moreover, the recognition of his plight does not deliver him from his predicament; it only seems to seal his fate (in accordance with the prophecy of the blind seer Tiresias). Indeed, Narcissus becomes ever more closely identified with the disembodied Echo, who pities him and repeats his laments, until he too loses his "dura superbia forma" (l. 354).[54] Ironically, it is Echo's momentary silence and the muteness of the tantalizing likeness mouthing his words, its lack of voice (*vox*) pointing to its lack of being or embodiment (*corpus*), that ultimately convinces Narcissus that he is his own love object ("Iste ego sum").[55] Yet this realization does not restore him: "His demystification is the passage from illusion to madness (*furor*)" for instead of ceasing, his desire intensifies.[56] This is part of the penalty for the crime of nonresponsiveness to others. Indeed, his punishment relies on a "specular structure of reversed symmetries" as well as on a "displacement" from verbal to visual repetition, such that Narcissus's ultimate liquefaction corresponds to Echo's disembodiment.[57] His punishment thus involves multiple displacements between the realms of the Imaginary and Symbolic that ultimately manifest in the Real, with the dissolution of the body.[58]

The image in the middle of *Dizain* 60 (line 6) that is taken straight from Ovid—thus linking Scève's poem directly to the Narcissus emblem via the Latin poet—is the moment of transformation, after the moment of self-recognition, when, no longer cold and hard, Narcissus is consumed by passion and suffering, and dissolves like wax before a fire: "sed ut intabescere flavae / igne levi cerae matutinaeque pruinae / sole tepente solent, sic attenuatus amore / liquitur et tecto paulatim carpitur igni" — "but, as the yellow wax melts before a gentle heat, as hoar frost melts before the warm morning sun, so does he, wasted with love, pine away, and

is slowly consumed by its hidden fire" (III, 487–90).[59] The Poet–Lover's waxlike liquefaction ("Qu'il me consume, ainsi qu'au feu la Cyre") recalls his dissolution into tears, which is repeated throughout the volume (see *Dizain* 82, for example[60]) and associates him with what would traditionally have been seen as a kind of feminized subjectivity (passivity, lamentation, weeping, sobbing), as well as the allegorized description of Narcissus in Plotinus and Marsilio Ficino, where the youth appears to drown in his own tears.[61] The Neoplatonists compare Narcissus to the soul seduced by corporeal beauty. He is ultimately portrayed as consumed by his own tears ("in lachrimas resolutus consumitur").[62] In Ovid's narrative, Narcissus's strength and vigor drain away as he cries out "heu frustra dilecte puer!" — "Alas, dear boy vainly beloved!" (III, 500). As we have seen, the notion of having loved in vain (*frustra*) is echoed in the motto of *Délie*'s seventh emblem and sixtieth *dizain*. The motto surrounding the image within the geometric border asserts: "ASSES MEVRT QVI EN VAIN AYME," a dictum reiterated in the last line of the *dizain*—a repetition with differences.[63] The last two lines of the poem are in the form of a question that emphasizes the imbricated themes of love, death and vanity through paradox and hyperbole, likely based on the Ficinian idea that unreciprocated love is homicidal and sacrilegious, as the lover's soul goes to live in the other without receiving the soul of the beloved in exchange.[64] According to Neoplatonic principles, this turns *Délie*'s poetic persona into a "martyr to love."[65] Moreover, as we shall see, one of the ideas in the Narcissus myth and in Scève's poetry is that the torments of such a love neither end in death nor help one to transcend death. Not only is the Lover trapped in a kind of death-in-life vicious cycle as long as he exists, there is no escaping the torments of love even after death, which provides no relief from the unhappiness of unrequited love. Like Tantalus, the unhappy Narcissan lover continues to desire what he cannot grasp, even after his demise. The Latin poet tells us that even as he cries his last farewell (*vale*) —his head sinking into the green grass and his eyes sealed by death— Narcissus cannot stop gazing at his image and continues to do so even in the underworld: "tum quoque se, postquam est inferna sede receptus, / in Stygia spectabat aqua" — "And even when he had been received into the infernal abodes, he kept on gazing on his image in the Stygian pool" (III, 504–5).

As Brenkman explains, what happens to Narcissus is a kind of "imaginary capture."[66] Indeed, one might go so far as to say not only that he is he deceived by the realm of images (of the Imaginary), but that he himself is then also trapped, transformed and transfixed into a kind of motionless image. It is as if he slips from one side of the mirror into the other, becoming the insubstantial or insensible simulacrum he gazes upon as he drinks in the reflective waters of the argentine pool (through both mouth and eyes). In the end, he too becomes an insubstantial shade vanishing from the sensible world without a trace, save for the yellow and white flower they find in his place. He goes from being full of life and movement (hunting in the wood) to becoming fixed and static as a lifeless image. Indeed, this is prefigured in Ovid's text, where he is already compared to a motionless statue carved from Parian marble from the moment he is struck by the sight of his likeness in the silvery pond.[67] As we have seen, love and death seem to strike simultaneously through the gaze and through consumption of the silvery waters at the same moment. It is thus through the mouth and eyes—related to the voice and the gaze, which are *objets a* for Lacan and the primary modes of suffering and self-expression for Scève's Poet–Lover—that Narcissus drinks in what causes the immortal longing that can only lead to a death-in-life that in turn leads to endless repetition in death.[68] The life-in-death proffered is not a transcendent one. On the contrary, Narcissus serves as a negative example to Neoplatonists. According to Plotinus, the youth's confusion comes from a kind of disorder of the soul that forgets its higher purpose, allowing itself to become fascinated by its own reflection in matter, and is thus destroyed by material passions.[69] Narcissus mistakes his external appearance for his true self, whereas the true self is not to be found in the body or in the visible world, which is but a shadow of the real world of Ideas in Neoplatonic thought, including Marsilio Ficino's *Commentarium in Convivium Platonis, De Amore* (VI, 17), where Narcissus is described in terms that echo the allegory of Plotinus "On Beauty" (*Enneads,* I, 6, 8). As Sergius Kodera explains, "What is common to all of these stories is the idea that mirror reflections are identified as instrumental for self-recognition as well as self-deception, and that the mirror has the capacity to change the active gaze into a passive object that is victimised by its own glance."[70] However, in Ficino's *Commentarium*, the mirror also becomes a metaphor for the process of imprinting that occurs as a result of the *innamoramento*, when

the first glance of the beloved, which is described as a kind of wounding, infection or bewitchment (*fascinatio*) transmitted by sanguine vapour (*spiritus*) through the eyes, becomes internalized and imprinted, as in a mirror, in the heart and soul of the lover (see II, 8 and VII, 1).[71] This can also be seen in Scève's first *dizain*, where the piercing gaze of the Beloved (referred to as "Mon Basilisque") during the *innamoramento* is described as a kind of wounding that penetrates through the eye and deep into the soul, turning the sacrificial Lover's heart and mind into a kind of temple for the likeness of his Idol:

> L'Oeil trop ardent en mes jeunes erreurs
> Girouettoit, mal cault, à l'impourveue:
> Voicy (ô paour d'agreables terreurs)
> Mon Basilisque avec sa poingnant' veue
> Perçant Corps, Cœur, et Raison despourveue,
> Vint penetrer en l'Ame de mon Ame.
> Grand fut le coup, qui sans tranchante lame
> Fait, que vivant le Corps, l'Esprit desvie,
> Piteuse hostie au conspect de toy, Dame,
> Constituée Idole de ma vie.[72]

The Basilisk who (like Medusa) can kill with a glance is also the subject of the twenty-first emblem (which I study elsewhere).[73] As we can see in *Dizain* 1, the helpless Lover is the sacrificial victim of the aggressive eye that has violated him and turned him into a shrine to the Lady he now idolizes. The third *dizain* also describes the *innamoramento* as a kind of venomous infection, portraying the internalization and idolatry of the Beloved's image as a kind of immolation of the Poet–Lover, who expresses a desperate and impossible hope: to find beatitude in the depths of the "bas Enfers."

> Ton doulx venin, grace tienne, me fit
> Idolatrer en ta divine image
> Dont l'œil credule ignoramment meffit
> Pour non preveoir à mon futur dommage.
> Car te immolant ce mien cœur pour hommage
> Sacrifia avec l'Ame la vie.
> Doncques tu fus, ô liberté ravie,
> Donnée en proye à toute ingratitude:
> Doncques espere avec deceue envie
> Aux bas Enfers trouver beatitude.[74]

The immoderate contemplation of the image of the Beloved and the reference to the "bas Enfers" are reminiscent of the story of the foolish Ovidian youth, as well as his ultimate fate. Yet, as can be seen through references to Narcissus in the seventh emblem and *Dizain* 60, as well as other poems (including *Délie*'s mirror poems, which I study elsewhere), the Poet–Lover's passion and idolatry cannot lead to deliverance or transcendence.[75] As Baker explains, "the hoped-for transmigration and recovery of self does not take place here. In this sense, the lover paints his own figurative death and shares in Narcissus's final fate."[76] Like Narcissus, he is subject to a kind of imaginary capture and is doomed to the endless repetition of the same traumatic moment of the *innamoramento* that keeps him transfixed, even in death. Instead of leading upward to beatitude, wholeness or transcendence (like the eyes of Dante's Beatrice that mirror divine light leading to Paradise), the Poet–Lover's circuitous specular itinerary seems to lead only to more torment and fragmentation. As Sara Sturm-Maddox explains (in relation to the signifying systems of two great Tuscan writers that clearly influenced Scève), the vertical system of communication in Dante's Paradise becomes a closed horizontal circuit in Petrarch's *Rime sparse*, that are haunted by the specter of Narcissus.[77] Yet Petrarch's *Rime* still proffer the hope of redemption through the final poem to the "Vergine bella" at the end of the calendrical structure of the work, whereas Scève's *Délie*, which has a more tautological structure, offers no such hope of salvation at the end, no doubt in part because the object of worship is a simulacrum rather than a true Divinity.[78] Just as Ficino's Narcissus confuses true beauty (the light of God) with that of the body (its shadow or reflection), Scève's Poet–Lover turns the image of his Beloved into that of an Idol or Deity from the very first *dizain*. The iconoclasm of Neoplatonist and Judeo-Christian models (which eschew the making of idols or graven images) can also inform our reading of the Poet–Lover's idolatry of the Beloved as a kind of 'error,' akin to that of Narcissus. In Augustinian terms, he confuses the creature with the Creator. Thus, instead of finding enlightenment or salvation, he finds himself like Narcissus, "Plongé au Stix de la melancolie" (*Dizain* 369, line 1). Likewise, the final emblem and accompanying *dizain* suggest that his harsh and bitter conflict ("bataille asprement rude," *Dizain* 447, line 8) will continue beyond death. As stated in the motto to Emblem 50, his war will follow him even after his demise: "APRES LA MORT MA GVERRE ENCOR ME SVYT."[79]

Moments of transformation such as those explored through the Narcissus myth cannot be portrayed in an emblem the way they can be evoked in verse. The picture printed from a woodblock is static: it captures an instant and does not unfold in time the way a poem or story does. It cannot give a narrative sequence the way a text can. Yet, it can entertain a dialogic relationship with texts and contain within it elements that recur within the diegetic frame of the myth. Indeed, when we first see *Délie*'s seventh emblem in the context of Ovid's tale, we recognize it as depicting the moment when Narcissus first perceives his image in the reflecting pond. However, when rereading the image in view of the end of the narrative, we can see that the woodblock captures the everlasting fate of Narcissus beyond death as well, as it is also an image of the youth contemplating his reflection in the Stygian pool. The seventh emblem thus evokes two scenes in Ovid's story that suggest the repetition of an iterative present both in life and after death: Narcissus when he first contemplates himself in the silvery waters of the forest where he has been hunting, and *in morte*, when he continues to contemplate his image in the waters of the underworld. Seen from this perspective, it is almost as if, through the uncanny chiasmic threshold phenomenon of specular reflection (and mechanical reproduction), the final scene at the Styx already inhabits the first scene at the silvery spring that is doomed to keep repeating itself forever. This sort of doubling, displacement and temporal dislocation emphasizes the paradoxical reflections and reversals at the visual and structural level, along with the life-in-death, death-in-life themes central to Scève's love lyric.[80]

Thus, the Narcissus emblem also affects the way we read the text. The pictorial and verbal dimensions of the text—which can be related to Narcissus and Echo's visual and auditory reflections in Ovid's myth and which correspond roughly to Lacan's Imaginary and Symbolic realms (or to condensation and displacement in Freud's *Traumdeutung*[81]) —cannot be read in a linear manner.[82] They must be read and reread dialogically as well as retroactively, along both vertical (metaphorical, allegorical, paradigmatic) and horizontal (metonymic, sequential, syntagmatic) axes. Emblems serve not only to invite comparison to a set of paradigmatic models or intertexts (including Ovid, Plotinus, Ficino, Dante, and Petrarch, as we have seen) or to punctuate the landscape of the text by breaking up the sequence of words with images; they also encourage readers to look forward and backward, proleptically and analeptically, across space and

time within the volume, for, as Giordano explains, their "iconic function overlaps with a hermeneutic one."[83] As we have seen, the Narcissus emblem anticipates *Délie*'s final woodblock (Emblem 50) and accompanying *dizain*, as well as other images and poems that stress the Lover's continued suffering beyond the tomb. It also refers back to earlier devices and epigrams including the liminary *huitain,* where the poetic persona states that it is the repeated deaths, "les mortz, qu'en moy tu renovelles," that he wishes to describe in this "Oeuvre."[84]

Indeed, we might suggest that part of what is so innovative in Scève's use of emblems is the way he destabilizes the relationship between image, motto and poem, so that it is difficult to establish the primacy of one over the other: all three elements (or four, if we include the frame, as does Sieburth[85]) are signifiers that point to each other in a circular or even multidirectional manner and whose signifieds seem to multiply exponentially the more one tries to fix meaning. One might even suggest that Scève seems to be critiquing the idea of 'natural signs' and deconstructing the analogical or allegorical mode of reading, as well as the horizon of expectation normally reserved for both emblem and *impresa*.

The Narcissus emblem can also serve as a caveat for readers of words and images in this specular work, for, as Philip Hardie and Jaś Elsner remind us,

> Narcissus functions as a more general paradigm for the beholder of a work of art, for there is a narcissistic quality in the ancient rhetorical formulation of response to realist works of art, that, in Jaś Elsner's words, is predicated on the beholder's 'assimilating the image into the framework of his own subjective consciousness.' The viewer reads into the image of his own phantasies, and in so doing transgresses the boundary between the world of the viewer and the world of the artwork, producing 'a union of realities between beholder and image'.[86]

Reading, like love, involves transference, which is a kind of unconscious imaginary projection or capture that makes it as difficult to distinguish between reality and illusion, subject and object, or past and present, as it does to differentiate between self and other/Other.[87] In that sense we, as readers, are very much like Narcissus. As Philip Hardie explains, if Narcissus exemplifies the lover and represents the archetypal spectator, he also functions as an emblem for the reader: "Narcissus is a figure for the desiring reader, caught between the intellectual understanding that texts are just texts, words with no underlying reality, and the desire to believe in the reality of the textual world. Narcissus turns into a sophisticated reader at the

moment he recognises that the reflection is himself."[88] Hardie is referring here to Elsner's critique of the "the 'naturalist desire' of the beholder of an illusionist work of art to believe in the reality of the images."[89] Yet what does it mean to be a 'sophisticated reader,' if Narcissus is unable to free himself from his imaginary capture? As Elsner warns, "Just as Narcissus sees himself reflected in the pool and is deceived into a fatal love, so we who look at his image in a painting (and at his image in the pool within a painting) [or emblem] are ourselves putting a toe into the dangerous waters of his visual desire."[90]

Perhaps we need to take a cue from Echo's presence in Ovid's story and remember that visual and auditory reflections, like signifiers, have no stable referent; they can create only language and reality 'effects.'[91] Likewise, instead of creating any stable meaning, the visual and verbal echoes throughout the tissue or network of the text create a kind of spatial dimension, in which emblems and poems serve as nodal points or *points de capiton* that only seem to anchor sense provisionally, as they refer endlessly to other visual and verbal signifiers, both inside and beyond the text, as if in a hall of mirrors.[92]

Acknowledgment

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Notes

1 This can be seen in Andrea Alciato's emblem 69 titled "Philautia" or self-love, which portrays Narcissus contemplating his image and admonishes him for his self-satisfaction, which led to his transformation into a flower known for its insensibility (or stupefying effects). The accompanying verses warn readers (especially scholars who disrespect the authority of tradition) to avoid such smugness, lest it lead to them passing on new doctrines (*nova dogmata*) that are nothing more than their imaginings (*phantasias*). According to Mesnard (1984, 203), this emblem is absent from early editions of the *Emblematum Liber* (initially published in 1531), first appearing in the Venetian edition of 1546. Various editions can be viewed online at the "Alciato at Glasgow" site run by Alison Adams and her team: http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/. See, for example, *Emblematum libellus*, Venice 1546; or *Declaracion magistral sobre las Emblemas de Andres Alciato*, Najera 1615.

2 I am borrowing the term from Donaldson-Evans (1980).

3 Let us not forget that Alberti names Narcissus as the inventor of painting. See Alberti (1960, vol. 2, 26) and Alberti (1991, 61). For a detailed discussion, see Baskins (1993).

4 Butler (1990).

5 All quotations from and translations of Ovid's myth of Narcissus are from the Loeb Classical Library edition, Ovid (1999). As Bartsch (2000, 79) notes, "in Ovid alone, the story of Narcissus has been transformed into a story of coming to know the self: The presence of Tiresias's prophecy, the move from ignorance to understanding, and the emphasis on the moment of self-recognition seem to be uniquely Ovidian." Let us not forget that his blindness and clairvoyance are related to Tiresias's experience across genders: he lived as both man and woman. Blinded by Juno as a punishment for saying that a woman's sexual enjoyment was greater, he received the gift of prophecy from Jove as compensation. The story of this liminal character thus serves to betray a certain anxiety with regard to the boundaries between masculinity and femininity, while at the same time showing that there are powerful forces vested in affirming sexual difference.

6 All quotes of Maurice Scève's poems are from Gérard Defaux's critical edition of *Delie, Object de plus haulte vertu*; see Scève (2004, vol. 1). All translations of Scève's text are mine. With respect to Scève's poetic persona as a sort of "anti-Narcisse," see Mathieu-Castellani (1994, 104). As we shall see later, Claire Nouvet also describes Narcissus as an "anti-Narcissus." See below, note 50.

7 Gilbert (2005, 940–53).

8 Baker (1986, 5). Baker's book is devoted to showing the way Ovid's story of Narcissus "and its significant literary reinterpretations" have shaped "the entire erotic itinerary of the *Délie*" (5).

9 The emblems create what appear to be meaningful divisions in the work. According to Brunetière (1900, 905), there is numerological significance (*cabale*) in the number 441, the number of *dizains* without the first five liminary ones and the final three. The numbers 4 + 4 + 1 add up to 9, and 441 divided by 9 equals 49, which is the square of 7, as 9 is the square of 3. In his introduction to the *Délie,* Albert-Marie Schmidt turns his calculations into a neat formula: $5 + (9 \times 49) + 3$, affirming the signification of these numbers: he sees 5 as signifying man incarnate; 9, final reintegration; 49, the successive steps of solitary initiation; 50, as supreme illumination; and 3 as the trinity of God; Schmidt (1953, 71). It is interesting to note that there are no emblems in Schmidt's edition, which reproduces only the poems, thus eliminating the numerical divisions described in his introduction. Melançon (1975, 33–53) emphasizes the importance of the number 10 (present in the structure of the *dizains*, which are constructed of ten lines of ten syllables each) and what she calls the cubic architecture of the book: "l'architecture cubique du livre." She sees the combination of each emblem and 9 subsequent *dizains* as a bloc of 10 units. For a longer list of numerological interpretations, see Hallyn (1994). As Hallyn reminds us, any reading of the text must use the criterion of overdetermination to be valid. Moreover, as I explain elsewhere, numerological interpretations make no sense unless they are "tied into a greater allegorical, thematic, or temporal system": "numbers are meaningless unless they are anchored in a fixed signifying system—if they have no terminus, they can only point to other signifiers" in an endless referential chain; Frelick (1994a, 135). In my view, the indeterminacy of numerical signifiers and the proliferation of possible interpretations add to the undecidability of the work, which is mimetic of the situation of the errant and fragmented Poet–Lover and his impossible quest for love and oneness. This also serves to mirror (and frustrate) the reader's elusive search for a terminus in which to ground meaning. For a detailed reading of Scève's mirror emblems, see Frelick (2012).

10 According to Hudson (2008, 179), Sulpice Sabon "was the only publisher in Lyons at the time capable of reproducing the emblems."

11 Coleman (1981, 2). It is possible, though, as Saunders (2007) has recently suggested, that Scève may not have been the first to publish an emblem book on love; La Perrière may have published an emblem book titled *Cent considerations d'amour* in 1543.

12 Coleman (1981, 79).

13 Coleman (1981, 79–80).

14 Coleman (1975, 56) discusses Scève's *imprese amorose*, outlining the difference between moralizing emblems with a more universal and edifying message (as can be seen in the works of Alciati, La Perrière, and Corrozet) and the more personal function of the *impresa*: "Where the emblems are a moralising, didactic and commonplace genre, the *imprese* are personal, individual and non-didactic." For the initial development of her argument in this regard, see Coleman (1964).

15 Aynard (1969, 25) actually seems to propose both schemes (verse used to illustrate enigmatic visual devices and ready-made images as illustrations of poems) in the same paragraph. Either way, for him, the preexisting emblems would appear to precede the poems.

16 Giudici (1965–9, vol. 1, 311).

17 Much has been written on the subject of Scève's obscurity, even in his own time, when his poetry was criticized for its lack of clarity. For an outline of the ambivalent reception of Scève's verse according to changing horizons of expectation (Hans Robert Jauss) in an era that did not seem to value opacity, see Fenoaltea (1988). For more on the subject of Scève's obscurity, see: Coleman (1985), Rigolot (1994) and, more recently, Buron (2012).

18 Coleman (1975, 15).

19 Regarding Scève's use of *antiperistasis*, see Giordano (1980, 161–2) and Murphy (1993).

20 To view the works of Alciato, La Perrière and Corrozet, as well as Scève and other French emblem books of the sixteenth century, see the transcribed and facsimile versions, along with resources posted by researchers in the team of Alison Adams *et al.*, on the "French Emblems at Glasgow" site at: http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/. The Gordon Collection at the University of Virginia Library also offers a fine online resource with digital facsimiles for Alciato and some French emblem books at: http://www2.lib.virginia.edu/scholarlyresources/portfolio/gordon/emblem/. Many works can also be accessed through *Gallica*, the server of the Bibliothèque nationale de France: http://gallica.bnf.fr.

21 Daly (2008a, 1) explains: "A typical emblem combines a symbolic picture with two, sometimes more, brief texts. The motto, picture, and epigram are often referred to as *inscriptio, pictura,* and *subscriptio*, which are the neutral Latin labels that do not specify a particular form or function for the parts named [. . .] 'Emblem' can be regarded as a *mode of thought*, which combines pictured thing or word with meaning, and as an *art form* that combines visual image and text. To date, attempts to define the genre of illustrated books called emblem books have not been very successful." Daly also provides some historical context: "'Emblem' originally meant mosaic, insert or inlay, and it is no coincidence that individual emblems make miniature statements that are complete in themselves. Emblems are closely related to popular collections of sayings and epigrams, florilegia, and *loci communes*. In fact, emblems often derived from such collections, and then later in turn emblems were plundered for commonplace books, and used in various ways in schools" (5). He states that for "literary historians emblem books are the [. . .] manifestation of [an] allegorical mode" (9). In an article in the same volume, Daly explains that emblem books more typical of the genre (that would only reach its apogee a century later) generally share the same features: "Beneath the *pictura* comes a prose or verse quotation from some learned source or from the emblem writer, which functions as a *subscriptio*. On the facing page it is not uncommon to find an explanatory poem in the vernacular tongue of the emblematist, or a prose commentary." Daly (2008b, 46–7).

22 "Sixteenth-century treatises reveal a confusing use of terms, but the more personalized function and two-part form of the impresa clearly distinguish it from the more general application of the three-part emblem. The impresa, which comprises an image and a brief motto, is the personal badge of an aristocratic or powerful bourgeois personage or a group belonging, for example, to an academy. It makes a personal statement, and is an aspect of self-

fashioning or self-representation. Initially, symbolic statements inscribed on objects, i.e. belonging to the material culture rather than the print culture, such imprese were intended to be 'read.' The picture motif carried symbolic, that is, verbal significance, related to the bearer. Hence the occasional relation to heraldry." Daly (2008a, 5–6).

23 In the introduction to his English translation of the *Délie*, Sieburth (2003, xli), explains: "At least four distinct visual and verbal elements are thus put into play here [in the Narcissus emblem and accompanying *dizain*]—image, motto, frame, and poem—with each providing a different interpretation of the Narcissus myth." My use of the term 'epigram' to refer to the *dizain* is taken from the description of the poems as "durs Epygrammes" in the liminary *huitain,* "A SA DELIE," at the beginning of Scève's poetic sequence.

24 Coleman (1964, 7, note 8) notes that Menestrier also uses the term "emblème passionné" (in his 1684 *L'art des emblemes*) in a manner that suggests it means the same thing as "devise amoureuse."

25 Giudici (1965–9, vol. 1, 182–3).

26 The French term *devise* is also sometimes used for *motto*, which can add to the confusion. See Charpentier's preface to the 1564 edition; Charpentier (1984, 19). The slippage of terms heightens the sense of undecidability and contributes to the challenges involved in reading the work: where do we begin and how do we approach a work if critics cannot agree on the terms needed describe the elements that compose it? See also Guild (1985, 47).

27 Giudici (1965–9, vol. 1, 183).

28 Giudici (1965–9, vol. 1, 311).

29 Melançon (1975, 43–5) argues for the essential role of emblems to the composition of the book, both in the relationship between emblem and poem and in terms of the architectural design of the work, which is multidimensional. Alduy (2001, 289; 294), sees the two systems (visual and verbal, of emblem and text) as heterogeneous, but as nonetheless paradoxically creating a kind of unity within the text by creating webs of correspondences (as well as interference) throughout the work via the juxtaposition of disparate elements. These differing systems create divergent readings of the text that are equally legitimate, because evoked by different horizons of expectation inscribed in the text. See note 36 below for Alduy's analysis of the mottoes.

30 See note 15, above.

31 Saulnier (1948–9, vol. 1, 213).

32 See Giudici (1965–9, vol. 1, 310–11) (see also vol. 1, 199 on Narcissus; cf. note 39 below) and Stone (1969). Stone sees the mottoes as more important than the images and suggests that "Scève was more interested in the motto than in the emblem's picture and that the inspirational value of the motto lies in its relationship to Petrarchan concepts" (97): "Whereas the emblem frequently complicates or adds nothing to an understanding of the *dizain*, the motto unravels many a problem" (98). Like Giudici, he sees little relationship between emblem and poem: "Scève expended no particular effort to relate picture and *dizain*!" (99). He emits "the hypothesis that the emblems through their mottoes were to Scève primarily a literary rather than a visual inspiration" (103).

33 See the editions by Bertrand Guégan, Jean Porcher, A.-M. Schmidt, Hans Staub and Pascal Quignard cited in Giordano (1990, 56, note 17).

34 Giordano (1982, 32). See also Giordano (1990, 56; 59).

35 Melançon (1975, 35–6), compares the symmetrical arrangement of the emblems with the aesthetics and complex architectural organization of paintings at Fontainebleau, which call for "des lectures multiples."

36 Alduy (2003, 25). Alduy also indicates that the pithy sayings inscribed around the engraved images and repeated at the end of the accompanying *dizain* seem to come from the discursive

register of adages, proverbs or heraldic devices and are used in a kind of idiosyncratic system of "auto-citation" that refocuses attention on the text itself, rather than its intertexts (24).

37 The emblem can be viewed online at Gallica, the digital site of the Bibliothèque nationale de France: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8609581h/f35.image.r=Delie+sceve.langFR.

38 The virginal goddess Diana is frequently depicted with a hunting dog—see for example the mid-sixteenth-century painting of *Diana the Huntress*, accompanied by her greyhound, from the School of Fontainebleau (Louvre, Inv. 445). The presence of the dog (and the implicit reference to the Delian deity, who is identified with Délie in the volume) links the Narcissus emblem to that of another young hunter, Actaeon (also in book 3 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, 138–252), who is the subject of emblem 19 (see http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8609581h/f83.image.r=Delie%20sceve.langFR). Actaeon's dogs devour him for having gazed upon what he should not: Diana punishes the youth for seeing her naked at her bath. It seems that both young hunters have unfortunate encounters with sylvan pools and fatal glances that bring about their downfall: Actaeon is punished for gazing upon the inaccessible, virginal goddess—going from hunter to hunted as he is transformed into a stag and torn apart by his own hounds, who no longer recognize their master as he loses the power of human speech; Narcissus, on the other hand, proves too inaccessible, virginal or self-sufficient to those who gaze upon his beauty. He is thus punished by Nemesis at the silvery pond where he is captured by the gaze of his own unattainable reflection and, thus, paradoxically transformed into both desiring subject and desired object. Barberis (2012) describes Narcissus as the errant Actaeon's double and links them to Pentheus, who is torn limb from limb by Bacchants, who recognize him despite his feminine disguise and punish him for having infiltrated their exclusively female group and thus violated their sacred Dionysian mysteries. Barberis also reminds us that there is a long tradition, from antiquity to Giordano Bruno, that links Actaeon's dogs to the dangers of thoughts (or the search for divine wisdom and beauty) that may prove deadly to humans; Barberis (2012, 48). For more on Délie's name and the link to Delian deities (among others), see Frelick (1994b).

39 The term "companion dizain" is from Coleman. See her analysis of Emblem 7 and *Dizain* 60 in Coleman (1981, 15–18), which develops initial arguments from Coleman (1964, 13–14), and responds to Giudici, who sees only a marginal relationship between emblem and *dizain*. Cf. above, note 32. As stated above (note 6), all translations from the *Délie* are mine. While it is impossible to give an adequate translation of this poetry, I have tried to render some sense of Scève's tortuous language and syntax.

40 *Dizain* 60: "If this be Love, why then does he slay me, / who have so loved and never knew (how to) hate? / Never shall I cease to be astonished, / All the more so for never did I offend him: / But suffer still, without any complaint whatever, / That he consume me, as fire does Wax. / And killing me, he desires me to live, / So that loving another, I unlove myself. / Wherefore slay me more then, / Since he dies enough, who too vainly loves?" In his edition of the *Délie*, McFarlane notes that this *dizain* also seems to be in a dialogic relationship with Pernette du Guillet's fourth elegy, which claims to be a translation from an Italian prose passage and begins with the same two lines as Scève's poem; Scève (1966, 388). The elegy is reproduced by Saulnier (1944, 42–4). The fact that this *dizain* follows a form used by others emphasizes the fact that such poetry was far from 'personal,' in the way we think of more modern verse since the Romantic era. In the Renaissance, it was more often akin to a formal game or dialog with other poets, as can be seen with the *Grands Rhétoriqueurs* and poets (like Scève) who were influenced by them.

41 As Brenkman (1976, 304), explains, Ovid's narrative "situates the pool as the place where Narcissus's transgression will be answered. It is the scene of a punishment."

42 Brenkman (1976, 305): "The pool's isolation from the rest of the natural world is strikingly complete. Nearly every descriptive detail negates or excludes the human and the natural. Not

even a shepherd, the image of man living in nature, has ever come to the pool. Its surface is never disturbed by animals or fallen branches, and even the ubiquitous sun does not warm it. If the pool yet seems undeniably a part of nature since it is surrounded by flourishing grass, one more detail needs to be noted: it is the pool itself and not rain which sustains the grass, 'quod proximos umor alebat.' That Narcissus would go to a place no one else had ever found neatly corresponds to his own characteristic isolation from the world of others."

43 The Poet–Lover says that he is not like Narcissus because he loves another (rather than himself)—yet Narcissus also initially believes that he loves another. Giordano (2010, 395) explains "that there are at least two mixed hypothetical syllogisms implied by the lover's arguments: A / *Modus Ponens* / If I am innocent, then Love should not punish me. / I am innocent. / Therefore Love should not punish me. / B / *Modus Ponens* / If I am already dead, then there is no point in trying to kill me again. / I am already dead. / Therefore, there is no point in trying to kill me again."

44 Nouvet (1991, 104) explains: "Narcissus is indeed punished because he failed to respond to the other; his drama is explicitly designated as the just retribution to a criminal unresponsiveness." As Brenkman (1976, 298) puts it: "His *dura superbia* intervenes between desire and touching and so interrupts the natural movement of sexuality, its proper history. Sexuality is the circuit of reciprocality between self and other in which touching, sexual contact, follows upon and exhausts desire. And, as the stories of Echo and Narcissus illustrate, when desire is neither reciprocated nor suppressed, death intervenes. By suspending Echo's desire, putting its aim out of reach, Narcissus pushes her toward death. In that sense, his refusal takes on the dimension of a crime. Moreover, his actual relation to a 'social context' is less than minimal since he refuses any such relation and excludes himself from the world of others. And in that sense, his central characteristic is in fact an aberration."

45 Nouvet (1991, 105). According to Mathieu-Castellani (1994, 106–7), Narcissus also incorporates Echo, his "double féminin," who sees this as another self, a self that is other, as a result of a kind of split or doubling in which he observes himself without seeing himself, as he tastes the pleasure in the displeasures of melancholy. As Bartsch (2000, 84–5) reminds us in "The Philosopher as Narcissus," the specular scene itself transforms the lover, emasculating and feminizing him: "In both Greece and in Rome, a broad range of texts testified to the idea that only the 'effeminate' man—the passive homosexual, the eunuch, the hermaphrodite even —would consult a mirror [. . .] Moreover, in a similar confusion of cause-and-effect relations that we have seen earlier in connection with ancient catoptrics, the mirror can also symbolically *transform* the virile man into such an effeminate. Ovid's story of Hermaphroditus (*Met*. 4.285–388) is a case in point: Here the youth who refuses an amorous nymph but dares to step into the mirroring waters of her pond—Ovid stresses the water's reflective capacity—is transformed in that pond into a single body with twin sex organs (*duplex*, 4.378; *biformis*, 4.387). And forever after, this mirror pool would render all who used it into *semiviri*, half-men (4.386). [. . .] And tellingly, even Narcissus, looking into the mirror, adopts the traditional traits of the lovesick woman rather than a man: He begs not to be abandoned, rends his clothes, and beats his chest (*Met*. 3.480–3). In other words, the ancient mirror is not neutral in its reflective effects: What it renders back may emasculate the original." It is interesting to note that Petrarch also seems to identify himself with Echo as he compares the Lady to Narcissus in *Rime* 45, in which the mirror becomes "Il mio adversario." As Baker (1986, 11) explains: "the poet chides the Beloved as she gazes adoringly into a mirror and reminds her of the unhappy result of Narcissus's specular infatuation." This Petrarchan sonnet contains an implicit warning or threat lest the lady's harshness and pride lead to a similar fate as that of the Ovidian youth.

46 It is important to remember, as Brenkman (1976, 299) notes, that Echo's "strange speech is a punishment imposed on her [by Juno] because she acted as a sentry protecting the secrecy of Jove's adultery with other nymphs. Whenever she saw Juno approaching, she would engage

her in a lengthy conversation until the nymphs escaped unnoticed [. . .] Echo is punished for the way she used the power of speech. Accordingly, the punishment denies her control of her speech: she can no longer choose her own words or initiate dialogue."

47 Nouvet (1991, 109). According to Nouvet, the subject "acquires the status of an enigma" (118). Moreover, (following Maurice Blanchot) she suggests that the Ovidian drama stages a justice that is "disastrous" because of the impossibility of responding: "it is this enigmatic responsibility which the Ovidian law invokes when it presupposes a responsible subject at the very moment when both the subject and his capacity to respond cannot possibly exist" (118).

48 Baker (1986, 4).

49 Baker (1986, 31–2).

50 See Lacan (1966). Nouvet (1991, 132) (following Blanchot on the poet as Narcissus) describes Narcissus himself as a kind of "anti-Narcissus": "The literary text functions like Narcissus's mirror because it repeats the originary inscription, that is, the originary *fall* of the self into an image of the self. The text/mirror does not reflect/inscribe a self, as subject endowed with life and consciousness, but instead denounces the inherent fallacy of this 'subject,' its ghostlike quality. Writing itself, the self writes itself out, thus repeating the disastrous self-inscription that 'Narcissus' names, his dissolution, his falling into a mere simulacrum deprived of subjectivity. Writing therefore cannot provide the comfort of any self-recognition. Writing, 'I' does not recognize itself nor does it approach a greater 'consciousness' of itself. The story of Narcissus's self-recognition is also the story of the impossibility of any 'self'-recognition: 'I' can only fail to recognize 'itself' since there is no recognizable 'self,' since there is precisely no self. It is in that sense that Narcissus is *also* anti-Narcissus."

51 Brenkman (1976, 306).

52 Baker (1986, 74).

53 Hardie (2002, 145).

54 According to Baker (1986, 130), "The two characters achieve [a kind of] coalescence through the disappearance of their forms [. . .] Narcissus thus becomes as formless as Echo, and lacks in addition her lingering *parole*. But beyond this dramatic identification, the two characters coalesce in a new equality of suffering, since Narcissus now too has loved an inaccessible object. The structure of their amatory experience is the same: Echo loved Narcissus (a true 'other'); Narcissus loved what he long considered to be 'another.' Thus Ovid continues to address the problem of otherness even as he makes mirror images of Echo and Narcissus."

55 Brenkman (1976, 311–12; 317–21). As Brenkman points out, this makes dialog impossible.

56 Brenkman (1976, 323).

57 Nouvet (1991, 119).

58 As Hardie (2002, 164–5) notes: "In Lacanian terms Narcissus is inflicted with the delusion of a true presence in the realm of the Imaginary as punishment for his refusal to enter a relationship with Echo [and the others she stands for] in the realm of the Symbolic, conducted through the mediation of language."

59 Baker (1986, 4–5) also underscores this quotation from Ovid embedded in the center of *Dizain* 60: "Here the lover gathers increasing momentum in his outraged *plainte*, decrying his unmerited suffering at the hands of Cupid. Within this *plainte* and directly in the middle of the poem, we find the most concrete and incontestable allusion to Narcissus. In comparing his own love-death to the gradual consumption of wax by fire, the lover employs a quotation from the Narcissus myth in the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid uses the same analogy to evoke Narcissus's own consumption in passion." It is also interesting to note that both wax seals and mirrors were used as major metaphors for the transmission and retention of visible forms or 'species' in the mind during the Middle Ages. For more on this, see Camille (2000, 210).

60 As I have explained elsewhere, in *Dizain* 82, "the Poet describes himself as having been so consumed by the flames of his ardent desire that all that is left of him are crying eyes and a

mouth pleading for mercy—organs that serve at once as the signs of his torment and as the means of its expression." Moreover, "Images of dissolution abound in the work. The Poet–Lover is reduced to ashes (D 13, 82, 288), dust (D 82), melts like wax in the fire (D 60) or frost in the sun (D 290), and often dissolves into fountains or steams of tears (D 13, 93, 200, 238, 307, 335, 373). Like the examples cited above, these images of fragmentation or dissolution are almost always related to problems of expression." Frelick (1994a, 31).

61 See also Bartsch (2000) (cf. note 45 above), who explains that the specular scene may also emasculate and feminize the lover. Rocher (1991) also writes about gender inversion in the *Délie*.

62 Marsilius Ficinus, *Commentarium in Convivium Platonis, De Amore*, VI, 17; Ficino (2002), 195. Ficino's Neoplatonic reading of the myth seems to be influenced by that of Plotinus "On Beauty" in the *Enneads* (I, 6, 8), who (unlike Ovid) refers to the drowning of the credulous youth.

63 Alduy (2003, 27) (who privileges the verbal over the visual dimension of the work) underscores the importance and originality of this schema of citing the motto at the end of the poem, thus setting up textual repetitions and echoes at the verbal level (without regard to the images, in her view).

64 Ficinus, *Commentarium*, II, 8.

65 As Giordano (2010, 399) puts it: "Not only is he in a state of death, but he is a martyr to love. With each renewal of the *innamoramento*, he is struck with love for Délie only to be robbed and killed, since she does not adequately return his devotion."

66 Brenkman (1976, 305).

67 As Kodera (2010, 72) explains, this links the story of Narcissus to that of Pygmalion. Indeed, this comparison invites readers to contemplate the way they view images. As Hardie (2002, 145–6) notes: "The boundary between art and reality is overstepped by the application of the statue simile not to the inanimate object of Narcissus' stupefied gaze, the reflection, but to his own living person; but since the reflection is of himself, the simile applies equally to the object of his gaze. He is his own simile. . . . Narcissus' motionlessness (418 *immotus*) makes the image at which he marvels even more like a statue . . . Narcissus' erotic desire for the image that he first believes, and then wishes he could believe, to be a real person is a figure for the 'naturalist desire' of the beholder of an illusionist work of art to believe in the reality of the images."

68 For more on the gaze and the voice as *objets a* in relation to Scève, see Frelick (2001).

69 See Hadot (1976, 100–3). As Kodera (2010, 70) explains: "in Plotinus' version of the Narcissus story, the mirror serves as a symbol of the disorder that befalls souls after they become fascinated by their own reflection." As we saw in note 62 above, Plotinus allegorizes the myth, though unlike Ovid, he suggests that the youth is swept away to a watery death in the *Enneads*, "On Beauty" (I, 6, 8). In her book on the history of the mirror, Melchior-Bonnet (1994, 123) also writes about Narcissus's transgression, as seen by Neoplatonists, as well as moralizing writers of the Middle Ages, like Dante, who placed him in Purgatory with counterfeiters who content themselves with forged currency and false appearances.

70 Kodera (2010, 71).

71 For more on this kind of lovesickness, see Frelick (2005, 51).

72 *Dizain* 1: "The Eye, all-too-ardent in my youthful errors, / Spun 'round, a directionless weathervane: / Behold (Oh fearsome and agreeable terrors), / My Basilisk with her stabbing stare / Piercing Body, Heart, and Reason unaware,/ Did penetrate deep into my Soul of Souls. / Great was the blow, which yet bladeless / Makes, though the Body live, the Spirit depart, / Pitiful sacrifice consecrated to you, Lady, / Ordained Idol of my life."

73 For Emblem 21, see http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8609581h/f91.image.r=Delie%20sceve.langFR. For a

more detailed analysis of Scève's mirror emblems, see Frelick (2012).

74 *Dizain* 3: "Your sweet venom, grace of yours, made me / Idolize in your divine image / Whose credulous eye unwittingly trespassed / Failing to foresee my future damage. / For in immolating this heart of mine as homage / Sacrificed life along with Soul. / Thus, Oh ravished liberty, were you / Given as prey to all ingratitude: / Thus, I hope with disappointed desire / In deepest Hell to find beatitude."

75 Frelick (2015).

76 Baker (1986, 4).

77 Sturm-Maddox (1992, 121–2).

78 For more on *Délie*'s "structure tautologique," see Risset (1971, 97–100).

79 See http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8609581h/f207.image.r=Delie%20sceve.langFR.

80 See Frelick (1989) and Frelick (1994a).

81 Let us not forget that Lacan's categories are derived from Freud's work on the interpretation of dreams, among others.

82 As Vinge (1967, 11–12) notes: Ovid was likely the first to combine the themes of auditory and visual reflection, owing to "the similarity of motifs." She says that the idea may have come from the term "*imago vocis* or simply *imago*," which was used in Latin to designate an "echo." Moreover, it is important to remember, as Camille (2000, 216), reminds us, that in the Late Middle Ages, "Optics and semantics were intimately associated in both theory and practice in models and in making images. Seeing and reading, within the theoretical system described here, are presented as synonymous. This is the most radical idea for art history, that our dichotomies of 'text and image,' 'word and image,' even our bifurcated semiotics, is based upon thinking that would have been alien to the fourteenth century, when seeing and reading were part of the same bodily operation, involving perception and cognition in the search for knowledge."

83 Giordano (1982, 24).

84 For more on the relationship between the seventh and fiftieth emblems see Mathieu-Castellani (1986).

85 See above, note 23.

86 Hardie (2002, 147).

87 For more on the subject, see Frelick (1999).

88 Hardie (2002, 147). According to Lacan, love has a narcissistic structure. See Evans (1996, 103–4).

89 Hardie (2002, 146). He also later states: "After his self-recognition Narcissus is caught between disbelief in the substantial existence of his reflection and an irresistible desire to suspend disbelief, the tension that gives structure to the experience of readers of fictions such as those written by Ovid. Narcissus' situation now exactly mirrors that of the engaged reader: he knows with his rational mind that the reflection has no reality, but cannot stop himself from continuing to address it as if it had" (148).

90 Elsner (2000, 45).

91 See Barthes (1984).

92 On a final note, we might want to ask about the role of Narcissus's dog in *Délie*'s seventh emblem. Is he there just to signal the fact that the youth is resting from the hunt? Is he meant to remind us of Cerberus watching over Narcissus as he contemplates his image in the Stygian pool or of Actaeon's fate for gazing upon what he should not (as suggested in note 38 above)? Or is he a symbol of fidelity as he looks indulgently at the master who has lost his self-mastery? Is he there to mediate our gaze? Or is he reminiscent of Aesop's dog who, like Narcissus, fell into the trap of mimetic desire, mistaking his reflection in the water for another, letting go of the meat he held in his jaws in the hopes of getting a larger piece from the other dog he thought he saw as he crossed the river? If so, perhaps he functions as another (less

tragic) caveat or figure of the reader who must choose how to interpret what he thinks he sees in this complex mirror text.

Part II

Mechanisms for Actualizing Desire

From Seduction to ‘Post-Coital Man’

5 Who is to Blame? Representing Adultery in Early Modern Books

Alciato, Aneau, Brant, Ripa

Sabine Engel

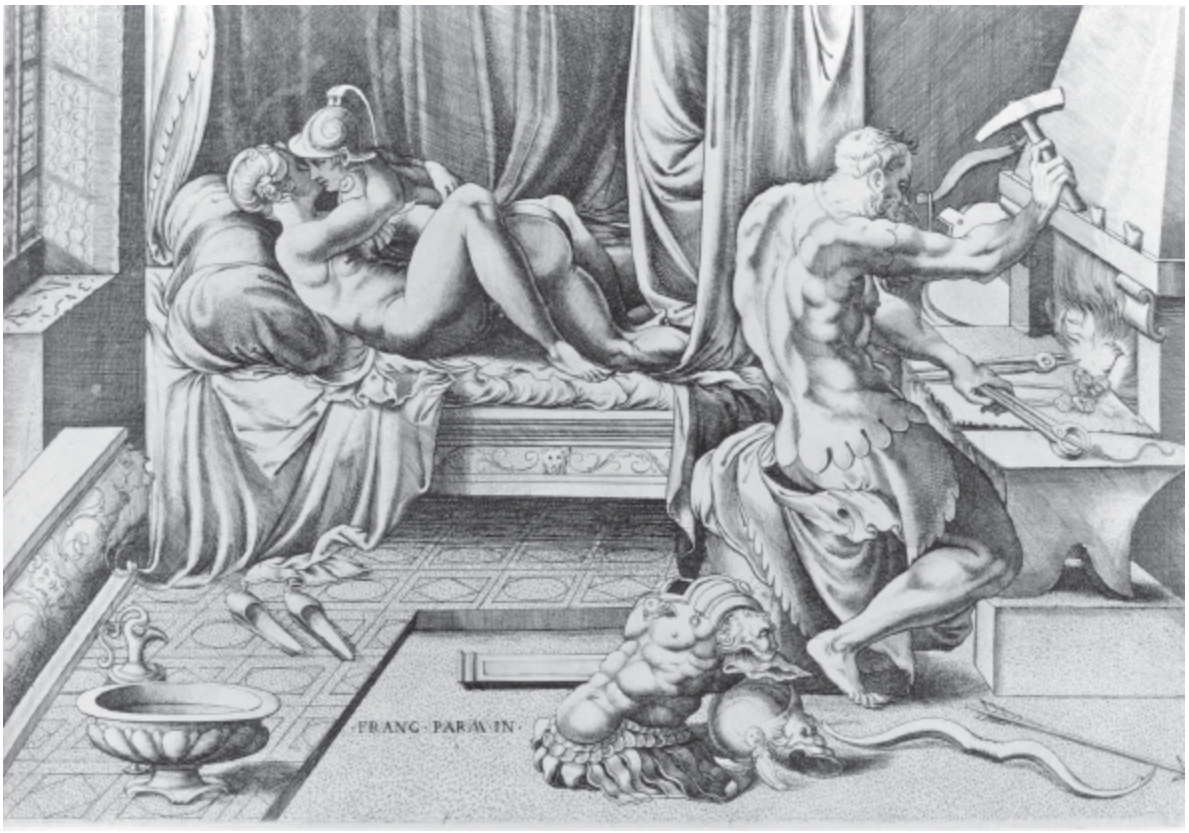

Figure 5.1 Enea Vico after Parmigianino, *Venus, Mars, and Vulcan*, 1543, engraving, 231 × 348 mm. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, 788-18.

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One of the clearest and most easily legible iconographic representations of adultery in the European Renaissance is found in an engraving by Enea Vico, after Parmigianino: *Venus, Mars and Vulcan* (1543; Figure 5.1). The illicit sexual act is evidently taking place at the very moment shown in the image. To ensure that the scene does not appear to be showing a simple seduction, or fornication by an unmarried couple, the viewer also has to be able to identify the specific role of each figure. In Vico's print, the adulteress Venus and the adulterer Mars are embracing on a bed, while in the foreground Vulcan, the betrayed husband, is forging the net with which he is planning to capture the transgressors *in flagrante delicto*.

The viewer inevitably takes the side of the two young offenders. Who would not sympathize with Venus, who is in love with the attractive young Mars, rather than with the hunchbacked old Vulcan, whose muscles are standing out like fish scales? As Ovid already suggested in the *Metamorphoses*, who would not prefer to be Mars in this situation—and conversely, which female viewer would not want to be in the place of Venus?[1] The engraving was censored in Rome.[2] Even sexual intercourse among the gods was not allowed to be shown in such detail, let alone sensual lust on the part of a woman.[3] At a time when younger girls were often married to older men, they might easily have identified with Venus and been encouraged to take pleasure in such strictly prohibited love affairs.

In Renaissance society, adultery was regarded as the gravest possible transgression by women— "il sommo vituperio" (the highest offense), as the Florentine humanist Matteo Palmieri, for example, described it in his *Vita civile* (*c.* 1432–6).[4] Adultery, according to Palmieri, led to illegitimate births, the abandonment of children and complex inheritance problems. Adultery was a threat to male honor, civil peace and ultimately to the welfare of the state.[5] In mythological scenes, more iconographic freedom in the depiction of sexuality was generally granted to depictions of the gods than to those of humans. As the example of Vico's engraving shows, however, restrictions persisted here as well.[6] But how was adultery to be represented when it involved humans rather than gods? More importantly, did a distinct iconography of adultery exist during the Renaissance?

To explore these issues, I have examined a large number of the emblem books that reached the peak of their popularity during the sixteenth century. Emblem books are particularly suitable for research on this topic, as an emblem consists of both text *and* image; it is composed of a motto

(*inscriptio*), picture (*pictura*) and an epigram (*subscriptio*). In addition, as they were closely related to contemporary humanist thought, emblem books convey strongly educational and normative demands and moral lessons.[7] It might therefore be expected that maxims condemning adultery would appear frequently in these works. However, an examination of all of the emblem books listed by Mario Praz, with 1560 set as an arbitrary end point, shows that adultery was described and depicted extremely rarely, and also in very different ways—although the basic idea, a categorical condemnation of the act itself, remained unaltered.[8] It is no coincidence, therefore, that Arthur Henkel and Albrecht Schöne, in their substantial study of emblem books, mention only two examples of complete emblems that refer to adultery. One of these is included in many editions of Andrea Alciato's *Emblemata* (first edition 1531), and the other is in Barthélémy Aneau's *Picta poesis* (1552).[9]

Jakob Locher, *Stultifera navis* (1497)

Before discussing these emblems, I would like to draw attention to a book that predated them. Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff* (1494), which also features a combination of words and images, resembles the emblem books —as does the Latin translation and adaptation of it by Brant's pupil, Jakob Locher, entitled *Stultifera navis* (1497).[10] The Latin translation enabled the book to be read all over Europe, making a vital contribution to the immediate and striking success of Brant's work.[11] At the same time, modifications of parts of the *Narrenschiff* and further additions to the text by Locher made it possible for the *Stultifera navis* to reach a learned audience, in contrast to the more popular *Narrenschiff*. The arrangement of the chapters and images, however, remained unchanged in the two books.[12] We shall focus here on the Latin version of the book, referring to the German counterpart only when it is necessary to elucidate the text.

The protagonist of Brant's book is a jester, whose role is to denounce the evils of society and to make people aware of their offenses, which can be summed up under the seven deadly sins: lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy and pride.[13] Chapter 33 is entitled *De adulterio* (*Von eebruch* in the German text). It shows that adultery and prostitution were regarded at the time as being closely related. The woodcut, which occupies nearly two-

thirds of the page, is attributed to the Haintz Narr Master (Figure 5.2).[14] It illustrates the lines of the motto:

> A fool pretends to snore while wide awake,
> His fingers always covering his face;
> He lets his wife by others be possessed
> And heeds her lures; the sly cat chortles at the jest.[15]

The motto identifies the husband in the image as the jester. He is sitting at the table, covering his face with his left hand and pretending he cannot see. But he is of course able to observe everything by peeking through his fingers. Standing beside him, his wife is tickling his nose with a reed, symbolizing that she is deceiving him through flattery. In the middle of the table, surrounded by food, a cup and a knife, there is a pile of coins, which —only in the German text—are explained as representing *roerroub,* the earnings from prostitution.[16] Under the table, there is a cat chasing three mice. With a fourth one already in its mouth, the cat symbolizes insatiable desire. The German text explains that a cat still likes mice even after it has already bitten into one,[17] and continues with an extended comparison between the cat and lascivious women.[18]

An anonymous print dating from the seventeenth century, perhaps from Venice, shows how popular the woman–cat comparison must have been.[19] It depicts an elderly, grotesque-looking courtesan or procuress holding a cat with a mouse in its mouth near her face, half caressing the pet, half presenting it to the beholder. The animal metaphor is intended to warn men not to fall into the snares of women, who are evidently driven by instinct and desire alone.

The woodcut in Brant's book can be fully understood only when the text relating to it is taken into account. The image actually shows that the two partners are deceiving each other, but it is only the text that specifies that adultery is a basic evil of society in general.[20] Moreover, in the *Stultifera navis* a gloss added in the margin beside the *pictura* blames both the husband and wife. The man is accused of procuring, as indicated in the image by the coins in the middle of the table.[21] In this case, the man's offense is considered to be as grave as that of the woman. It also becomes clear that adultery was closely associated with prostitution in the Early Modern period.

Figure 5.2 Jakob Locher, *Stultifera navis* (Basel: Johannes Bergmann von Olpe 1498), fol. 44r, *De adulterio*. Woodcut by Haintz Narr Master, 115 ×

85 mm. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Inc. 607.

Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—PK, http://resolver.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/SBB0001C87400000000.

Figure 5.3 Léon Davant after Luca Penni, *Lussuria*, detail, from the cycle *Justice and the Seven Deadly Sins*, early 1550s (?), etching, 325 × 469 mm, detail Ø *c.* 100 mm. Paris, private collection.

Italian Artists of the Sixteenth Century: The School of Fontainebleau, ed. by Henri Zerner (The Illustrated Bartsch, vol. 33) (New York: Abaris Books, 1979), 382.

Another reference to the woodcut is found in Luca Penni's *Justice and the Seven Deadly Sins* (early 1550s?), indicating the extent of the influence of Brant's work. It is a remarkable series of eight prints, engraved by Léon Davant, which Penni created towards the end of his life when he was still in the service of King François I of France. The iconography of the images can only be fully deciphered with reference to the *Narrenschiff*.[22] The image in question is located in the left upper corner of the sheet entitled *Lussuria* —the deadly sin of lust, which includes adultery (Figure 5.3).

It is found in one of the four *tondi* placed around the central oval scene, which depicts Venus seated in a carriage, drawing shackled male prisoners and animals along in a triumphant procession. In comparison with the woodcut by the Haintz Narr Master (Figure 5.2), Penni is clearly accentuating the misdeeds of the wife here. She now has a younger lover at her side, and they are both laughing at the old, white-bearded husband. In this engraving, the husband appears to be little more than a tormented and

weary victim, and there is no explanatory text placing the blame on both parties—the husband and the wife.

Andrea Alciato, *Emblematum liber* (1531)

Even more influential than Brant's *Narrenschiff* and the *Stultifera navis* was the *Emblematum liber* by the Milanese lawyer Andrea Alciato—since hardly any other contemporary book sold as many copies.[23] It was first published by Heinrich Steyner in Augsburg in 1531.[24] It was translated into several languages and reprinted more than 170 times up to 1661.[25] In June 1546, the sons of Aldus Manutius published an edition in Venice entitled *Emblematum libellus*. The origins and historical impact of the Venetian edition have not been adequately investigated—remarkably, as the book features images that are unique. Not a single one of these Venetian woodcuts was used in any of the subsequent editions of the *Emblemata,* nor is anything known about the artist who created them.[26] Henkel and Schöne do not mention the Venetian edition in their wide-ranging study of emblem books.[27] Otherwise, they would have identified a further emblem of adultery. The Venetian *Emblematum libellus* of 1546 includes 86 newly incorporated emblems, the origins and provenance of which are also unknown.[28] Two of these newly inserted emblems (19 and 48) address the topic of adultery—each in a different manner.

EMBLEMATVM LIBELLVS. 12
Cuculi.
Ruricolas agreſte genus plerique cuculos
Cur uocitent, quænam prodita cauſa fuit?
Vere nouo cantat Coccyx, quo tempore uites
Qui non abſoluit iure notatur iners.
Fert oua in nidos alienos, qualiter ille
Cui thalamum prodit uxor adulterio.
B iiij

Figure 5.4 Andrea Alciato, *Emblematum libellus* (Venezia: Aldus Manutius, 1546), fol. 12r, Emblem 19: *Cuculi*, anonymous woodcut, 61 × 77 mm. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, R Nv 7209.

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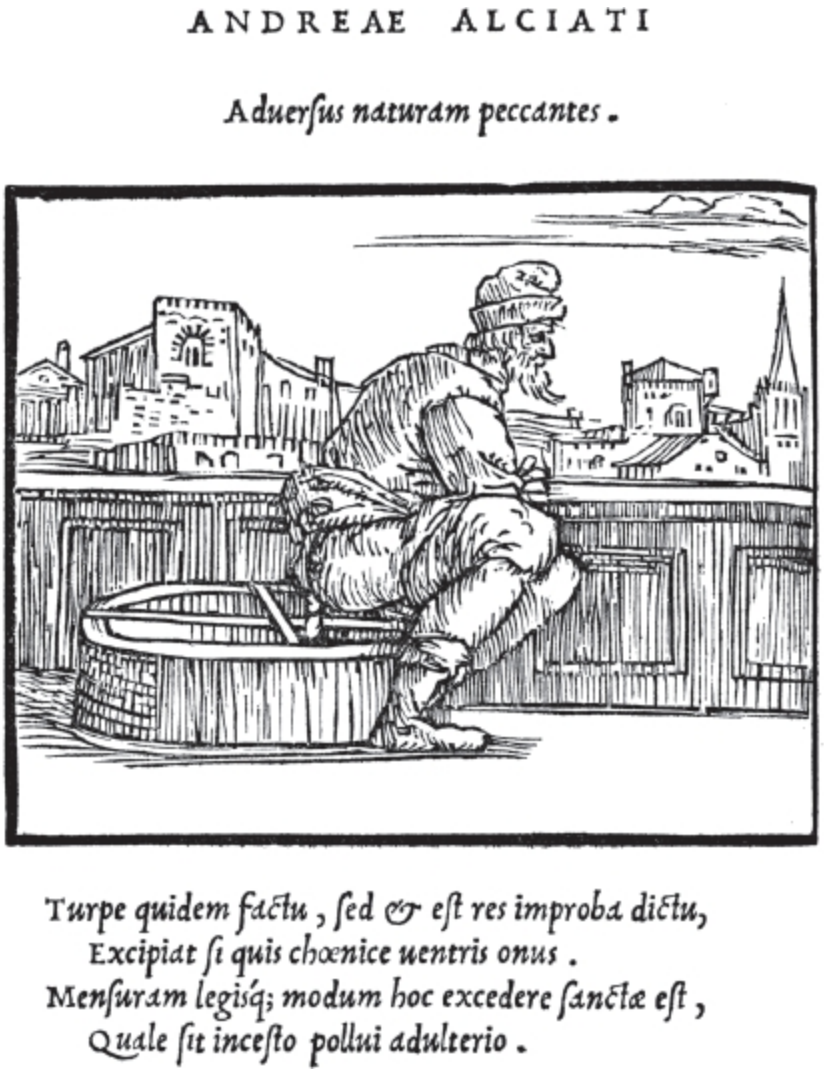
ANDREAE ALCIATI
Aduerſus naturam peccantes.
Turpe quidem factu, ſed & eſt res improba dictu,
Excipiat ſi quis choenice uentris onus.
Menſuram legiſq; modum hoc excedere ſanctæ eſt,
Quale ſit inceſto pollui adulterio.

Figure 5.5 Andrea Alciato, *Emblematum libellus* (Venezia: Aldus Manutius, 1546), fol. 26v, Emblem 48: *Adversus naturam peccantes*, anonymous woodcut, 61 × 77 mm. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, R. Nv 7209.

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The first, quite inoffensive, is entitled *Cuculi* (Cuckoos; Figure 5.4). Here Alciato is drawing on Aristotle's *Historia animalium* (563b, 618a) and Pliny's *Naturalis historia* (X, 26–7; XVIII, 249).[29] The adage on 'Cuculus' by Erasmus may also have contributed to it.[30] In Chapter 33 of the *Narrenschiff*, Brant also compares the upbringing of children from an extramarital liaison with the incubation of foreign eggs, and hints at the cuckoo.[31] In the opening lines of his *subscriptio*, Alciato—like Aristotle, Pliny and Erasmus—condemns the laziness of farmers who have not pruned their vines before the first cries of the cuckoos. He claims that such farmers

therefore deserve to be called by the name of this supposedly lazy bird[32]—but the last two lines bring about a sudden change of mood:

> The cuckoo leaves her eggs in the nests of others, just like the man for whom a wife betrays the marriage chamber with her adultery.[33]

This definition of the derogatory term 'cuckoo' apparently did not always meet with unanimous approval. Later commentators repeatedly emphasized that it should not be a person whose wife was living unchastely who should be called 'cuckoo,' but rather the man committing adultery himself.[34] Nevertheless, the *subscriptio* appeared unaltered in all subsequent editions of the *Emblemata*.

As the title suggests, the *pictura* of the *cuculi* emblem in the *Emblematum libellus* is innocent and unoffending. In the foreground there is a large bird sitting at the top of a tree, and there are some buildings in the background. As mentioned earlier, none of the Venetian woodcuts was included in the other editions of the *Emblemata*, which show *cuculi* variants with two birds,[35] or more precise illustrations of the epigram: farmers pruning their vines, soldiers and a bird that is sometimes carrying an egg in its beak, probably while flying to another bird's nest.[36] The sexual reference is not made explicit in these woodcuts.

By contrast, the second newly incorporated emblem in the Manutius edition concerning adultery, not mentioned by Henkel and Schöne, differs drastically in its image and text (Figure 5.5). The motto reads *Adversus naturam peccantes* (Those who sin against nature)[37] and in the *subscriptio,* incest and adultery are listed as the two crimes that offend "the measure and canon of divine law"; the offenses are compared with emptying "the burden of his bowels into a choenix."[38] Although the choenix, a receptacle for measuring the daily portion of food, is replaced by a well in the picture, the corresponding woodcut is an unmistakable illustration of the epigram. An old man with a Phrygian cap is misusing the well as a latrine; it is quite clear that he is emptying his bowels into it, as we can even see the excrement. The illustration not only depicts contamination of a possible vessel, but—even worse—it also indicates the pollution of precious drinking water. The poisoning of wells was a crime of which Jews had been accused since the fourteenth century,[39] and in the woodcut the man with his Phrygian cap and the pointed beard is being depicted as a Jew.[40] In this anti-Semitic image, a male representative of a stigmatized group has been

selected as the offender. The *pictura* thus does not contain any misogynistic references, nor does the *subscriptio*.

Barely 80 years later, a newly designed image for this emblem shows how easy it was for a woman to take the place of the Jewish scapegoat (Figure 5.6). By that time, the complete emblem was being omitted from the later editions, presumably in order to avoid offense.[41] The epigram itself was printed sporadically, but without the *pictura*.[42] This shows that the power of the image was regarded as being much greater than that of the text. Only the authoritative Padua edition of the *Emblemata* (1621), issued by Johannes Thuilius, features the complete emblem once again. *Adversus naturam peccantes* falls under the category of *Luxuria* here, whereas the *cuculi* are listed under *Stultitia*, probably in reference to the first part of the *subscriptio* in the latter.[43]

In the Padua edition, it is clear that the unknown artist was looking for a much more elegant visual solution for the explicit content of *Adversus naturam peccantes* (Figure 5.6). The richness of detail in the woodcut exceeds even that of the *subscriptio*. It depicts a room with a closed door in the shadowy background, with a huge bed on the right embellished with a female herm in one corner. This is the setting for the image that points to the sexual offense, which is mentioned only in the *subscriptio* in the 1546 Manutius edition. The curtains of the bedstead are closed, just like the door. This is a symbol that alludes to the secrecy of sexual offenses, as is also suggested by the commentary.[44] In the foreground on the left, a jug and a goblet are placed on a table featuring a costly wood carving. A basin, referred to as ”golden,”[45] is apparently part of the setup and is placed in the lower right corner. It has been removed from its intended use: a squatting woman, gazing naughtily at the viewer, is defecating into it. The fact that she is completely naked and pictured in front of a bed is a reference to the crimes of adultery and incest that are mentioned in the epigram.[46] In this woodcut, the corrupting powers of feminine seduction are patently obvious. The ‘doubling’ of the female figure, with a depiction of a female herm as part of the bed, only serves to strengthen the message.

Aduerſus naturam peccantes.

EMBLEMA LXXX:

TVRPE quidem dictu, ſed & eſt res improba factu,
Excipiat ſiquis chœnice ventris onus.
Menſuram, legisque modum hoc excedere ſanctæ eſt,
Quale ſit incesto pollui adulterio.

COMMENTARII.

HVIVS Emblematis picturam nullus hactenus dedit, atq; ipſum etiam epigramma leui (quod aiunt) brachio perſtrinxerunt commentatores: ego verò nihil verebor rem turpiculam liberioribus impetere verbis, præſertim cum hæc zizania non perfunctoriam requirat runcationem. Quapropter ſic pictori præiui: Fiat lectus vndiq; peripetaſmatis velatus, iuxta hunc homo nudus ventrem in pateram auream exoneret, coram quo in mēſa quadam ſtet fictile poculum, & cyathus vitreus: cuius rei rationem iam ſubiūgemus. Quid autem in lecto velato agatur, ſufficit illud me & pictorem ſcire: parco enim caſtis oculis, & cum his etiam mentibus. Obid quoq; à Minoe hoc emblema ad calcem reiectum fuit, quod non videbatur committendum auribus terſis, tum quòd ipſi indignum viſum ſit explicatione prolixiore. Aſt me nō pudebit cū Virgilio ex Ennij ſtercore margaritas legere. Ergo ad rē.

Figure 5.6 Andrea Alciato, *Emblemata cum commentariis. . .* (Padova: Pietro Paolo Tozzi, 1621), 353, Emblem 80: *Adversus naturam peccantes*,

anonymous woodcut, 53 × 53 mm. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, R Nv 7245.

Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—PK.

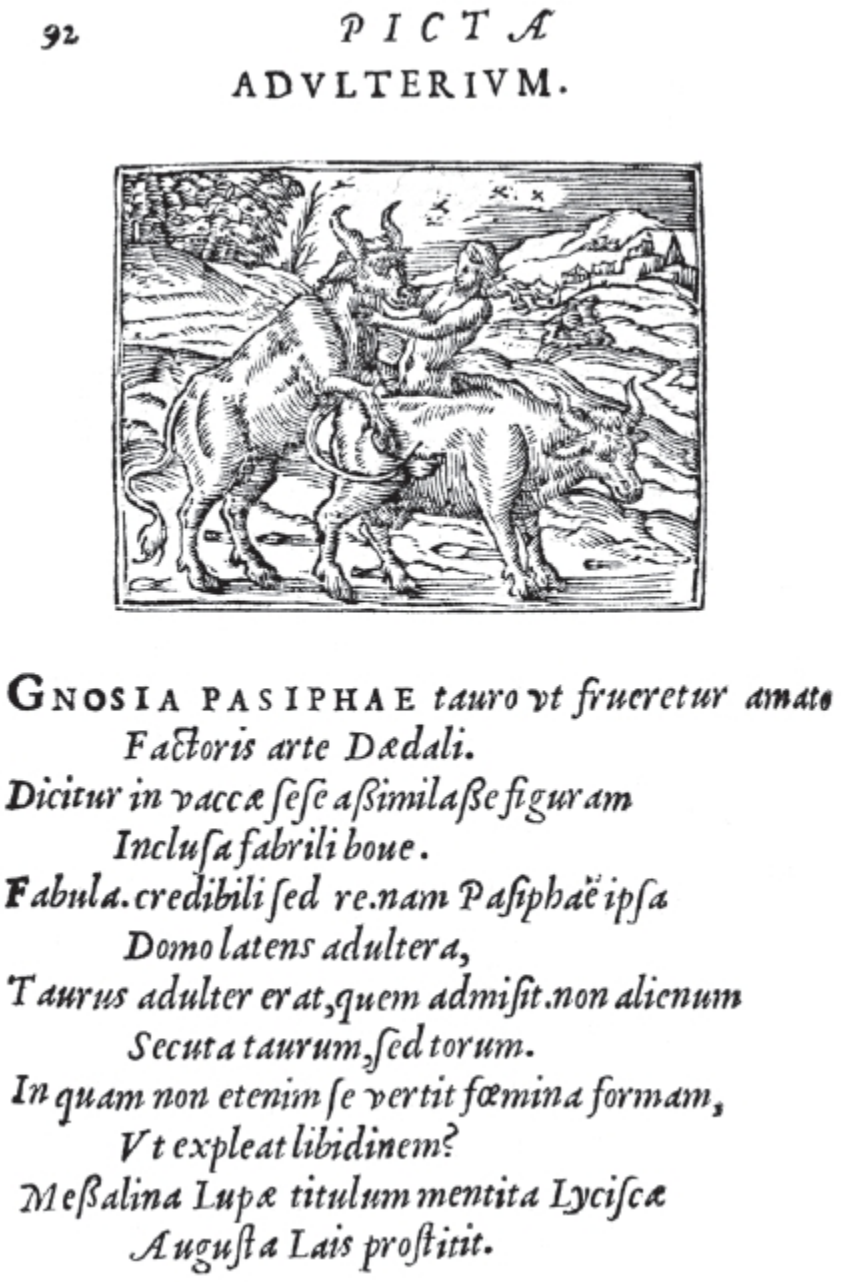
92 PICTA
ADVLTERIVM.
GNOSIA PASIPHAE tauro vt fruceretur amato
Factoris arte Dædali.
Dicitur in vaccæ ſeſe aßimilaße figuram
Incluſa fabrili boue.
Fabula. credibili ſed re. nam Paſiphaë ipſa
Domo latens adultera,
Taurus adulter erat, quem admiſit. non alienum
Secuta taurum, ſed torum.
In quam non etenim ſe vertit fœmina formam,
Vt expleat libidinem?
Meßalina Lupæ titulum mentita Lyciſcæ
Auguſta Lais proſtitit.

Figure 5.7 Barthélémy Aneau, *Picta poesis* (Lyon: Mathias Bonhomme, 1552), 92, Emblem 81: *Adulterium*, anonymous woodcut, 37 × 49 mm. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, R Nv 7209.

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Barthélémy Aneau, *Picta poesis* (1552)

There are no editions of Alciato's *Emblemata* in which an emblem appears with the term 'adultery' in its motto—unfortunately, as it would have helped readers to locate the exact passage referring to the specific offense. In fact, the earliest emblem that bears the explicit title of *Adulterium* is in a French book—Barthélémy Aneau's *Picta poesis*, printed in Lyons by Mathias Bonhomme in 1552 (Figure 5.7).[47] The epigram sounds rather misogynistic and recounts the story of Pasiphaë and her unnatural love for a bull. Messalina, the Roman empress who prostituted herself under a false name, is also mentioned in the *subscriptio*. Her role is to emphasize women's general disposition: their insatiable desire for unharnessed lust, resorting even to sodomy if all else fails, and their inclination to deceive.[48]

Figure 5.8 Johann Georg Hertel, *Des berühmten Italiänischen Ritters Caesaris Ripae allerley Künsten und Wissenschaften dienlicher Sinnbildern*

und Gedancken, welchen jedesmahlen eine hierzu taugliche Historia oder Gleichnis beygefüget (Augsburg: Johann Georg Hertel, *c.* 1760), plate 46: *Adulterium*, Gottfried Eichler, before 1761, engraving, 192 × 129 mm. Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Scrin A/567 : 1/10.

A small woodcut illustrating the epigram (Figure 5.7) depicts two animals precisely at the moment before they are about to copulate. The bull has already lowered two of its hooves onto the back of the cow. Pasiphaë can also be discerned, with the lower part of her body inserted into the artificial cow crafted by Daedalus. She is represented still standing, but to achieve her purpose she will have to position herself like a cow—a posture strictly forbidden by the Catholic church during sexual intercourse.[49] As a sign of emotional tumultuousness, her long hair is fluttering in the wind, while she is caressing the bull's throat with her hands.

The *pictura* shows a certain discrepancy from the *subscriptio*, giving an impression that the bull is appreciating Pasiphaë's tender touch and that Daedalus' artefact might not have been needed after all. The message conveyed by the image, once again, is stronger than that of the text. It suggests that a woman does not need any disguise—simply being a woman is enough to succeed in seducing anybody and/or anything.

An examination of all the emblem books printed up to 1560—and books similar to them, such as Brant's *Narrenschiff*—shows that visual representations of adultery are quite rare and scarcely intelligible on their own. A caption is indispensable to enable the offense to be identified. In addition, the ways in which adultery was depicted turn out to be quite diverse, as there was no canonical iconography for the topic. In addition, although adultery was regarded as the most serious form of female transgression and the seductive powers of women were feared, the images of adultery in these books are far from being dominated by women. A shift seems to have taken place during the second half of the sixteenth century, at a time when erotic prints were meeting with both increasing intolerance and also censorship.[50] Barthélémy Aneau's emblem *Adulterium* (Figure 5.7), Luca Penni's adaptation of the Haintz Narr Master (Figure 5.3) and the *pictura* of *Adversus naturam peccantes* in the Padua edition of Alciato's *Emblemata* (Figure 5.6) all indicate that women—in the course of only a few decades—were increasingly being brought into focus in connection with the topic of adultery.

Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia* (1613)

However, there are exceptions to these major trends, as Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* suggests. The work was first printed in Rome in 1593 by Giovanni Gigliotti, and it remained the most important book of allegories for over 200 years.[51] However, *Adulterio* was only added in the 1613 Siena edition of Ripa and did not include an image.[52] The text describes a young man, magnificently dressed, fat, seated and holding a serpent and a moray eel in his right hand, which are depicted in sexual union. In his left hand, he is holding a broken golden wedding ring.[53] Ripa explains his choice of a young man instead of a woman on the grounds that at that time the seven deadly sins, and *luxuria* in particular, were usually represented by female personifications and allegories.[54] He writes that men unjustly take more liberty in adultery than women do,[55] and goes on to argue that young men are addicted to sex and are ready to commit adultery much more often than men of any other age.[56]

None of the Italian editions of the *Iconologia* includes any illustrations of *Adulterium*. The first depiction of it was in the Augsburg edition by Johann Georg Hertel, published around 1760 (Figure 5.8).[57] The engravings were made after drawings by Gottfried Eichler. In the case of the *Adulterium,* the image of the young man sitting prominently in the foreground closely follows the indications in Ripa's text. In the background on the right side, however, Eichler has inserted a biblical story, apparently in order to provide a more easily comprehensible iconography of the term 'adultery.' The protagonist is now a woman, Bathsheba, the most famous adulteress in the Old Testament, who has just finished washing her feet. Although the Latin and German texts of the print emphasize only the culpability of King David,[58] he is barely discernible in the picture. Instead, Bathsheba is depicted in a quite seductive manner, as if she were claiming sole responsibility for the sexual transgression. So even in the case of Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* women were increasingly becoming the focus in the depiction of adultery in early modern Europe.

Notes

1 Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* IV.186–8; translated by Allen Mandelbaum, Ovid (1993, 116): ". . . such shame enchained. At this, one deity, / not given to solemnity, said he / would hope and

pray that such obscenity / and shame might be his lot . . .” (“. . . illi iacuere ligati / turpiter, atque aliquis de dis non tristibus optat/ sic fieri turpis . . .”).

2 Three states of the copperplate engraving are known: the one described here, a second in which the adulterous couple has been erased, and a third in which Venus alone is sleeping on the bed, with her pudenda covered with a cloth. All of the states of the plate are dated 1543. By contrast, the name of its publisher in Rome, Antonio Salamanca (*d.* 1562), is only found on the second and third states of the print, indicating that he was the one responsible for the changes. He must have purchased the copperplate engraving, and in order to be able to sell the prints again, must have initiated the alteration of the subject to show a more ‘innocent’ scene. See Petermann (2000) and Talvacchia (2001, 231–4).

3 Large numbers of highly erotic and even pornographic prints, such as Giulio Romano’s *I modi* (1527), depicting people in various sexual positions, were published in the sixteenth century. From the 1550s onwards, however, there was increasing intolerance towards such images. Cf. Petermann (2000).

4 Palmieri (1982, 158): “A woman’s greatest and foremost care must not only be never to conjoin with another man, but moreover to avoid every suspicion of such ugly wickedness. This fault is the greatest offense against uprightness, it eliminates love, it dissolves unity, causes uncertainty over children, brings infamy to families, leads to discord and hatred among them, and dissolves every bond. Such a woman no longer deserves to be called a married lady, but is rather a corrupt female, worthy of public opprobrium.” (“La maxima et principalissima guardia debbe essere nella donna non solo di non coniugnersi con altro huomo, ma di mancare d’ogni sospecto di sì brutta scelerateza. Questo fallo è il sommo vituperio della honestà, toglie l’amore, disiugne l’unione, reca seco la incertitudine de’ figliuoli, fa le famiglie infame et infra loro medesimi varii et odiosi et ogni coniunctione dissolve, né più merita essere chiamata maritata donna, ma corrotta femina et degna di vituperio publico.”) Unless otherwise mentioned, all translations here are by the present author.

5 Hacke (2004, 233).

6 Bull (2005, 169). There are, of course, some exceptional cases, as Giulio Romano’s *Sala di Psiche* (1526–8).

7 See Buck (1991, v–xx, xiii–ix) and Wuttke (1996, vol. 1, 11). Heckscher and Wirth (1967, col. 95) characterize emblems as having their content intensely focused on a moral purpose (“inhaltlich auf ein moralisches Ziel hin zugespitzt”). Schöne (1993, 45) emphasizes the “imperative, axiomatic quality of emblematic texts” (“imperativische[n] Maximencharakter emblematischer Texte”).

8 This study is based on the bibliography of emblem books given by Praz (1975, vol. 2, 49–53). All of the books printed before 1560 listed by Praz have been examined.

9 Henkel and Schöne (1976, 869–70; 1594–5).

10 Brant (1986, vii). Two editions of the *Stultifera navis* were published in 1497, authorized by Brant; another appeared in the following year. They show few differences. They were all printed by Johannes Bergmann von Olpe, who had also printed the *Narrenschiff*. See Brant (1961) and Hartl (2001). For English editions of Brant’s *Narrenschiff,* see Brant (1962) and Brant (1966). See also Manger (1983).

11 Manger (1983, 85–7), Brant (1986, vii–xiii) and Hartl (2001, vol. I.1, 28–9). For a list of the different editions, see Manger (1983, 67–74).

12 Hartl (2001, vol. I.1, 63–6; 166–8).

13 Pigeaud (1987, 47).

14 Winkler (1951, 40).

15 “Est fatuus, qui scit vigilanti stertere naso / Et faciem digitis contegere usque suis / Uxoremque suam subigi permittit et audit / Illecebras: ridet subdola catta iocos.” Quoted after Hartl (2001,

vol. I.2, 114). Cf. Brant (1962, 136): “If through his fingers one can see / And lets his wife promiscuous be, / As cat she views the mice with glee.”

16 Line 44; Brant (1986, 82). Cf. Brant (1961, 367). This part is omitted from the Latin text. Cf. Brant (1962, 138): “ . . . neighbors gossip one and all / And say he aids her, yes abets, / And shares the filthy pelf she gets.”

17 Verses 47–8; Brant (1986, 83). Cf. Brant (1962, 138): “The cats pursue the mice in haste / When once they’ve had a little taste.” These lines are omitted from the Latin text.

18 Lines 49–52; Brant (1986, 83). Cf. Brant (1962, 138): “Women who try out other men / Become so bold and shameless then / That deep they sink into the mire / And only think of their desire.” These lines are omitted from the Latin text. Cf. Gaier (1966, 146) and Pigeaud (1987, 48–9).

19 Matthews-Grieco (2001, 267, figure 38).

20 Hartl (2001, vol. I.2, 114): “It is a miserable matter and worthy of Cato’s censure / That none want to stay faithful in wedlock. / Nor does any one respect the law of adultery or the holy laws; / The Lex Iulia has lapsed, its ancient penalty is mute.” (“Res miseranda quidem et censura digna Cathonis, / Quod vult coniugii nemo tenere fidem. / Nullus adulterii legem aut pia iura veretur; / Iulia lex dormit, poena vetusta silet.”)

21 Hartl (2001, vol. I.2, 114): “One who hides his wife’s misdeeds is a defender of indecency. One who lets his wife offend disdains his own marriage and does not regard vice with indignation.” (“Patronus est turpitudinis, qui crimen celat uxoris. Qui patitur uxorem suam delinquere matrimoniumque suum contemnit quique contaminationem non indignatur.”) This was only added in the second and third Latin editions. Cf. Hartl (2001, vol. I.1, 43; 101–2).

22 See Zerner (1969, 15–16; 24–5), plates L.D. 85–92; Wilson-Chevalier (1996).

23 For a biography of Alciato, see Abbondanza (1960), Green (1965, 1–78) and Callahan (1985, xxiii–xxvi).

24 Praz (1975, vol. 1, 248–52). For the development of the ‘prototype of the emblem book’, see Wolkenhauer (2002, 847–48). As early as the end of the seventeenth century, Alciato was being called *‘emblematum pater et princeps’*. See Schöne (1993, 24).

25 Köhler (1986, 9) and Buck (1991, v).

26 Manning (1996, ix–xxi, xi). See Grünberg-Dröge (2001).

27 Henkel and Schöne (1976, clxxvii–clxxviii) analysed the following editions of the *Emblemata*: Augsburg: Heinrich Steyner, 1531; Lyons: Guillaume Rouille, 1550; and the German translation by Jeremias Held, Frankfurt am Main: Sigmund Feyerabend and Simon Hüter, 1567.

28 Green (1965, 19) and Manning (1996, xi–xii). Alciato had been teaching jurisprudence in Ferrara for four years, until the moment when his *Emblemata* was printed in Venice. Cf. Abbondanza (1960, 73), Callahan (1985 xxiii–xxvi) and Simonds (1989, 96). Grünberg-Dröge (2001, 5–6), argues that Alciato was hoping to obtain a professorship at the University of Padua through publishing the edition.

29 Henkel and Schöne (1976, 870).

30 Adage IV.v.84, ‘Cuculus / Cuckoo’: Erasmus of Rotterdam (2006, 197–9). Claude Mignault has already pointed out this correlation in his commentaries. See Alciato (1621, 276). On Erasmus as a source for Alciato, see Callahan (1985, xxiii–xxvi) and Wolkenhauer (2002, 849–50).

31 Chapter 33 (*Von eebruch*), line 88; Brant (1986, 84). Cf. Brant (1962, 139): “A miser’s better as a guest / Than others’ eggs in one’s own nest.” It is difficult to identify the precise reception of the analogy, or whether *cuculi* was already a common saying in different languages at the time. However, Erasmus held Brant in high regard and dedicated an epigram to him. See Brant (1986, xviii).

32 Alciato (1546), fol. 12r: “Why should many people call husbandmen, a rustic clan, / cuckoos, and what reason was given for this? / In early spring the cuckoo sings, and whoever by that time / has not pruned his vines is rightly termed lazy.” Quoted after Daly (1985), I, Emblem 60. (“Ruricolas agreste genus plerique cuculos / Cur vocitent, quaenam prodita causa fuit? / Vere novo cantat Coccyx, quo tempore vites / Qui non absolvit iure notatur iners.”) Cf. also Henkel and Schöne (1976, 869–70).

33 Alciato, *Emblematum libellus*, fol. 12r: “Fert ova in nidos alienos, qualiter ille / Cui thalamum prodit uxor adulterio.” Quoted after Daly (1985), I, Emblem 60.

34 Alciato (1566a, 72): “The cuckoos are not, as people generally think, those whose wives are unchaste. On the contrary, they are those who lie with the wives and in the bedchambers of other men.” (“Cuculi (ut vulgus putat) non ii sunt, quorum uxores sunt impudicae: At contra qui alienis uxoribus, et thalamis incubant.”). Cf. also Alciato (1567b, 87). Claude Mignault, who edited some 17 editions of Alciato’s *Emblemata*, argued in the same way; Alciato (1599, 295): “The word *cuckoos* has been misused for those whose wives are unchaste; however, it is those who commit adultery with the wives of others who deserve to be called cuckoos much more—as is indeed observed in the innate quality of the bird that is accustomed to place its eggs in another’s nest.” (“Cuculi nomen abusive in eos traductum est, quorum impudicae sunt uxores: cum ii contra cuculi potius vocari debeant, qui uxores alienas adulterant, spectato nimirum avis ingenio, quae sua ova in nidis alienis ponere soleat.”) Under ‘cuckold’, the ‘derisive name for the husband of an unfaithful wife’, the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives an etymological note on the word’s derivation from the Old French for ‘cuckoo’ and points out that words for ‘cuckoo’ in both German and Provençal were also applied ‘to the adulterer as well as the husband of the adulteress’—although ‘in English, where cuckold has never been the name of the bird, we do not find it applied to the adulterer’.

35 Alciato (1581, 237) and Alciato (1599, 79).

36 Henkel and Schöne (1976, 869), Alciato (1551, 68), Alciato (1566b 72) and Alciato (1566a, 221).

37 Thomas Aquinas had already defined “vitium contra naturam” quite generally as every libidinous act incapable of leading to procreation (“quod est in omni actu venereo, ex quo generatio sequi non potest”). Cf. Ludwig Schütz (1958, 875), s.v. *vitium*.

38 Alciato, *Emblematum libellus*, fol. 26v: “It is quite shocking to relate, but even more so, it is a foul deed, / if anyone were to evacuate the burden of his bowels into a choenix [i.e. a vessel for measuring the daily food ration]. / This means transgressing beyond the measure and canon of divine law, / just as it would be to allow oneself to be defiled by sinful fornication.” Quoted after Daly (1985), I, Emblem 80. I do not agree with Daly’s translation of *incestus* and *adulterium* and would suggest that the terms should be taken literally. (“Turpe quidem factu, sed et est res improba dictu, / Excipiat si quis choenice ventris onus. / Mensuram legisque; modum hoc excedere sanctae est, / Quale sit incesto pollui adulterio.”)

39 See Greive (1983) and Schreckenberg (1996, 16).

40 See Schreckenberg (1996, 15; 23). For images of Jews see ibid., 77, no. 14; 165, no. 7; 381, no. 9.

41 The emblem was printed only once again, in Lyons in the following year, before being removed. Cf. Vuilleumier Laurens (2000, 169).

42 Manning (1996, xvii), mentions the example of the Alciato edition by Mathias Bonhomme in 1548. Another can be added: Alciato (1567b, fol. 55r–v).

43 Alciato (1621, 275–77): *Cuculi. Emblema LX*, and 353–55: *Adversus naturam peccantes. Emblema LXXX*.

44 Alciato (1621, 353): “Whatever was done within the curtained bed, it is sufficient that only I and the painter know what it was. And therefore I spare it from chaste eyes and from chaste

minds." ("Quid autem in lecto velato agatur, sufficit illud me et pictorem scire, parco enim castis oculis, et cum his etiam mentibus.")

45 Alciato (1621, 353); the commentary reads: "she discharges into a golden dish" ("in pateram auream exoneret").

46 See above, note 38.

47 Aneau (1552). Only four years earlier, Aneau had published an edition of Alciato's *Emblemata*: *Emblemata A. A. J. Cl. locorum communium ordine ac indice novisque posteriorum iconibus aucta* (Lyons: Rouille-Bonhomme, 1548). See Henkel and Schöne (1976), clxxix; Köhler, (1986, 63) and Vuilleumier Laurens (2000, 146 and note 3).

48 Aneau (1552, 92): "Pasiphaë of Cnossos, they say, made herself similar to a cow's shape to enjoy her beloved bull by the art of Daedalus the craftsman, enclosed in a crafted cow. It's a fable, but believable. For Pasiphaë herself is the adulterous wife lying hidden in the house, the bull the lover whom she admits; she follows not other bullocks, but bollocks [pun on *taurus,* 'bull' and *alienus torus*, 'another man's bed']. For what form will a woman not take on to satisfy her lust? Messalina, the Empress Lais, prostituted the false name of Lycisca the Whore." ("Gnosia Pasiphaë tauro ut frueretur amato / Factoris arte Daedali. / Dicitur in vaccae sese assimilasse figuram / Inclusa fabrili bove. / Fabula. credibili sed re. nam Pasiphaë ipsa / Domo latens adultera, / Taurus adulter erat, quem admisit. non alienum / Secuta taurum, sed torum. / In quam non etenim se vertit foemina formam, / Ut expleat libidinem? / Messalina Lupae titulum mentita Lyciscae / Augusta Lais prostitit.") Translation from Glasgow University Emblem Website, http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk; accessed 27 October 2015. See also Henkel and Schöne (1976, 1595). For the topos of women's insatiable desire for unharnessed lust, cf. Matthews-Grieco (2001, 261–71).

49 Delumeau (1983, 241).

50 See above, note 3.

51 See, for example, Stefani (1990).

52 Tung (1993, 18–19). The title of the Siena edition of 1613 suggests very clearly that the *Iconologia* was not exclusively addressed to artists: "Opera utile ad oratori, predicatori, poeti, pittori, scultori, disegnatori, e ad ogni studioso . . ."

53 Ripa (1613, 13–14). For the tradition of the wedding ring, cf. Brown (2009, esp. 54–5).

54 For representations of *luxuria*, see Hammer-Tugendhat (1987) and Delumeau (1983, 268).

55 Ripa (1613, 14).

56 Ripa (1613, 14): "He must be depicted young and pompous, since a youth appears vague in his appearance, and he is more disposed to the sexual act and ready to commit adultery than men of any other age group." ("Giovane, e pomposa si dipinge essendo che il giovane si dimostra vagho nell'apparenza, e disposto più d'ogn'altra età all'atto venereo, et a commettere adulterii.")

57 Ripa (1970, plate 46). See Tung (1993, 82–3). In this edition, all of the descriptive texts by Ripa were removed and the importance of the pictures was accentuated by the high quality of the engravings, which cover the whole page. New explanations in Latin and German were also added.

58 The text reads: "Holding the sceptres of marriage but breaking conjugal bonds, / King David received his punishment from the Lord" ("Sceptra tenens thalami socialia foedera rumpens, / Afficitur poenis Rex David a Domino") and "God had to punish David, / for he slept with Bathsheba" ("David musste Gott bestrafen, / weil er Bathsebam beschlaffen").

6 Cupid and the Bear

Emblems of Creation and Images of Seduction in Sixteenth-Century Art Writing and Love Imagery

Romana Sammern

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Figure 6.1 Otho Vaenius, *Amorum emblemata* (Antwerp: Typis Henrici Swingenij, 1608), 57: Cornelis Bol I after Otto van Veen, vignette of emblem 29, copperplate. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, 4-TE-56.

> Perpolit incultum paullatim tempus amorem. / Ursa novum fertur lambendo fingere foetum, / Paullatim & formam, quae decet, ore dare: / Sic dominam, ut valde sit cruda, sit aspera, amator / Blanditijs sensim mollit & *obsequio*.[1]
>
> Otto van Veen

Along with his pupil Peter Paul Rubens (*c.* 1577–1640), the painter and poet Otto van Veen (1556–1629; also known as Otho Vaenius) was one of the most significant painters of the Southern Netherlands. Together with his collection of sacred love images, *Amorum divini emblemata* (Emblems of Divine Love) (1615), the profane *Emblemata amorum* (Emblems of Love) was among the most influential emblem collections of its time and helped establish the popular genre of love emblem books, which spread throughout

Europe in the first decades of the seventeenth century.[2] Van Veen published 124 emblems of love for an international audience. Notable humanist scholars, such as Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) and Philipp Rubens (1574–1611), contributed laudatory poems, as did Daniel Heinsius (1580–1655), who printed the very first collection of Dutch love emblems in 1601. Four different versions combined Latin verses with Dutch, French, English and Italian lines, respectively, and were all published in 1608. Cornelis Bol I (*c.* 1576–1621) engraved the plates of the *editio princeps* in Latin, Italian, and French after van Veen's design.[3]

Emblem 29 of van Veen's *Amorum emblemata* shows Cupid in contemplation (Figure 6.1). Resting on his bow on a forest path, the god of love is watching a bear lick its cub. The accompanying verses explain the emblem's motto: "Time gradually completes a neglected love."[4] The image refers to the antique topos of the she-bear and her young. According to the entry on bears in Pliny's *Natural History*, a she-bear gives birth to a shapeless and eyeless lump of flesh, which the mother bear then shapes with her tongue.[5] In the Early Modern period, the story was known in the context of both love imagery and art literature. In the latter, the story of the she-bear was regarded as a metaphor for the arduous task of writing and revising a text. In the early sixteenth century, Titian used it for his impresa *Natura potentior ars* (Art is more powerful than nature) to represent the act of perfecting nature through art.[6] Van Veen's emblem, however, sets the topos of the she-bear and her young in the context of courtly love, presenting it as a process of seduction that lovers can manipulate. Similarly to the bear licking her cub, in love imagery, the flattering words and gentle kisses offered by a lover may have an effect on—or, in a sense, shape—the courted person's affections.

The *Emblemata amorum*, as a whole, are well known in emblem studies and art historiography as a junction of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century love imagery.[7] In the iconographical studies of Mario Praz and subsequently those of Anne Buschhoff, emblem 29 with Bol's vignette of Cupid and the bear has been considered as only one of van Veen's many *loci communes*. Philological studies trace the imagery of the she-bear and her young from ancient literature and pseudo-hieroglyphs to French emblem books and Venetian love literature.[8]

Combining text and image, love emblems are important tools and materials of analysis for iconographical and iconological studies in the

tradition of Erwin Panofsky. They provide pictorial riddles of the semantic knowledge of their time that, in a way, simultaneously decrypt and encode meaning.[9] Besides their significance in the fields of iconography and semantics, love emblems also stand at the convergence of art, art theory and love literature. Art, love, art theory and love imagery are closely connected, as is shown in Pliny's account of Butades of Sicyon's daughter, who, out of love, invented portraiture when she drew the outline of her departing lover's shadow on the wall.[10] Metaphors about a beloved person's portrait being painted on one's heart[11] or falling in love at the sight of a portrait were popular topoi in Medieval and Early Modern culture.[12] Recent studies on the link between creativity and sexuality in the early modern period show that this idea is not limited to analogies. Instead, concepts of love were deployed in image and text when artists, theorists and beholders thought about art and art production.[13]

Continuing along these lines of inquiry, my paper will focus on van Veen's *Emblemata amorum* in the Italian context—beyond the ancient (Ovid) and modern (Alciati) influences, which have been recently stressed by John Manning and Els Stronks[14]—and will juxtapose it with the metaphor of the she-bear in sixteenth-century art literature and seventeenth-century obscene literature. Instead of using the love emblems as tools for the semantic analysis of pictures, the love emblems themselves will be considered as agents of cultural knowledge in which ideas from love imagery, literature and art theory overlap and create new meanings.

The imagery of the she-bear and her cub is well known by art historians as both an art-theoretical image of invention and mimesis as well as a metaphor used in sixteenth-century Venetian love imagery.[15] Reading van Veen's love emblem alongside the popular obscene dialog *La Retorica delle Puttane* (The Whore's Rhetoric) (1642) by the Italian writer and former Augustinian canon Ferrante Pallavicino (1615–44), my paper stresses the sexual implications of the topos, which are closely linked to contemporaneous ideas of art production, creation and creativity.[16] It also draws on recent studies of the link between creativity and sexuality in Early Modern culture.[17] Pallavicino's *Retorica delle Puttane* is well known to literary historians and historians of sexuality, but, in his study on libertine literature in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, James Turner notes that Pallavicino uses terms from art theory to describe prostitution, declaring it an art form, while he considers the prostitute to be both artist and artwork.[18]

More recently, Ulrich Pfisterer has argued that Pallavicino, in his novel *Il Principe Hermafrodito* (The Hermaphrodite Prince) dating from 1640, deploys narrative devices related to art theory and the experience of images on the part of the beholder.[19]

By the sixteenth century, the art-theoretical history of the connection between rhetoric and the principles of painting already spanned two hundred years. Leon Battista Alberti had based his first art-theoretical treatise, *De pictura* (On Painting) of 1435/1436, on the framework of rhetoric. In their treatises, the Venetians Paolo Pino (1548) and Lodovico Dolce (1557) systematically related painting to rhetoric, making the junction a commonplace of sixteenth-century art literature.[20] Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti, the bishop of Bologna, took up this link in his theological treatise *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane* (Discourse concerning sacred and profane images) of 1582 and related rhetorical persuasion explicitly to painting. My paper argues that Pallavicino parodies this tradition by connecting rhetoric with prostitution and underpins it with terms from contemporaneous writings about art to provide a critique of mimesis. Besides descriptions of pictures, in his *Retorica delle Puttane*, he also refers to "artwork" (*artificio*), "execution" (*esecuzione*), "to fantasize, to imagine" (*chimerizare*), "to represent oneself" (*raffigurarsi*), and "to portray" (*ritrarre*).[21]

Taking Marsilio Ficino's dictum of love as the "master of all the arts"[22] literally, both Otto van Veen and Pallavicino draw on tropes from sixteenth-century art literature and emblem books that stress the carnal implications of seduction as well as the physical involvement of fantasy and imagination in art production and desire. This paper suggests that both van Veen's and Pallavicino's solutions give evidence of their knowledge of sixteenth-century writings on art and love literature, and, more importantly, that the two shared a common humanistic range of knowledge that involved literature as well as art theory. Van Veen deployed the topos of the she-bear licking her young into shape to link writing about art and love literature on a pictorial level; my reading of Pallavicino's *Retorica delle Puttane* enhances this point.

Pallavicino's *La Retorica delle Puttane*

Pallavicino's *La Retorica delle Puttane* is a satirical dialog between an old procuress and a young girl on how to become a successful prostitute that parodies Jesuit rhetoric as it was taught in schools in sixteenth-century Europe.[23] It combines themes from contemporary popular obscene literature with aspects of love literature and concepts of natural history and art theory. Alongside Pietro Aretino's *Ragionamenti* (Dialogues), pseudo-Aretine's *La puttana errante* (The Wandering Whore), and Alessandro Piccolomini's *Raffaella,* it was part of a courtesan's instruction in the canon of early modern obscene literature.[24]

Soon after it was first published anonymously in Venice, *La Retorica delle Puttane* gained scandalous popularity. Ferrante Pallavicino, a young, well-educated Augustinian canon from Padua living at the Convento della Carità in Venice,[25] was suspected to be the author. Several satirical publications against the Roman Catholic Church appeared between 1641 and 1642, which took aim particularly at Pope Urban VIII Barberini, the Jesuits and the papal Inquisition. These included such obscene books as *Il principe hermafrodito* and *La Retorica delle Puttane,* as well as the satirical writings *Il Corriero svaligiato* (The Post-Boy Robbed of his Mail) and *La Baccinata*, which included indirect attacks at the Pope.[26] Though published anonymously, they were all instantly ascribed to Pallavicino. Consequently, he was prosecuted by the papal nuncio and forced to go into hiding. After *La Retorica delle Puttane* was published, he had to leave Venice. In 1643, he was caught and imprisoned on papal property near Avignon. During his imprisonment, another blasphemous book was published in Geneva in 1644. This pro-Protestant satire, *Il divortio celeste* (The Celestial Divorce), in which Jesus files for divorce from the Roman Catholic Church, cost him his head.

The Prostitute's Art of Seduction

La Retorica delle Puttane presents prostitution as a cycle of erotic seduction and the fulfillment of sexual desire. Alongside the traditional schema of rhetoric, it views the arts of rhetoric and prostitution as being of equal significance.[27] Instead of the effective and persuasive language characteristic of rhetoric, it presents an art of persuasion that involves the physical body and mind of both the orator/prostitute and the audience/client.[28]

One of the core topics in *La Retorica delle Puttane* is eloquence—the art of fluent and persuasive speaking, which is the foundation of classic rhetoric.[29] Pallavicino describes eloquence as the art of persuasion through the accomplished and purposeful commitment of the whole body.[30] For this, a prostitute had at her disposal her body (*natura*) and its artificial embellishment (*arte*), which could be complemented through exercises (*esercizio*) and imitation (*imitazione*; of nature, i.e. other prostitutes).[31] Thus, Pallavicino locates the core questions of the prostitute's art of persuasion as lying between the imitation and perfection of nature—a concept introduced in aesthetics by Aristotle with his works *Poetics* and *Physics*.[32]

Though a man's desire was not seen as being easily influenced, a prostitute was expected to develop a wealth of techniques to enhance her appearance through the manipulation of mental images.[33] Primarily, Pallavicino explains, men frequent prostitutes because they can present themselves as ideal lovers by mimetically mirroring men's desires onto their own bodies. Anticipating his every wish, a prostitute promises to fulfill her client's sexual fantasy (for example, having sex with a virgin).[34] Contrary to this main thesis, however, Pallavicino admits that a prostitute is most successful in her attempts at seduction when she embodies ideas that are born of her own imagination. The power of her imagination enables her both to anticipate her client's desires and to convince him to desire that which she performs.

Chimerizing Desire: Fantasy and the Body

I would argue that by suggesting that prostitutes embody their own fantasies as well as reflecting their clients' desires, *La Retorica delle Puttane* ridicules and questions the origin and relation between fantasy, images and imagination. The only constant factor is the persuasive power of imagination—though the work does not distinguish clearly between imagination and fantasy. Pallavicino promises that once a prostitute learns to control and channel her imagination, she can seduce any man and satisfy even the most lascivious of appetites. To describe this process of embodying male desire, he uses the Italian verbs *chimerizare* and the reflexive form *chimerizarsi*.[35] The verb *chimerizare,* which can be translated as 'to imagine' or 'to fantasize,' derives from the chimera, a

mythical creature composed of a lion's head, a goat's body and a serpent's tail. Traditionally, the chimera referred to or symbolized fantasy and was used to describe the creative processes of inventing and shaping. In his treatise on poetry, for instance, Horace uses the figure of the chimera to introduce the topic of the generation of ideas. However, he also uses the chimera as a negative example of the exaggerated mixing of styles.[36]

In the Early Modern period, the chimera symbolized the creative power of fantasy.[37] According to Carlo Battisti and Giovanni Alessio's Italian etymological dictionary, the verb *chimerizare*, meaning 'to invent,' was first used in the sixteenth century, most likely by Venetian art writers.[38] Lodovico Dolce, for example, used it in 1565 in his treatise on colors to refer to 'fantasy,' in the sense of 'to imagine.'[39] Nevertheless, its use was closely linked with sensual, physical perception. 'To fantasize' meant to receive impressions gathered through physical perception and to combine them in a new or different manner. In a negative sense, it could create distorted ideas, illusions and false conclusions. In a positive sense, 'to fantasize' could also signify the act of inventing and creating, which promises the generation of new knowledge. In 1567, the Umbrian sculptor Vincenzo Danti, for instance, enthusiastically compared chimeras with the fine arts. In his view, both the fine arts and chimeras are not confined to merely imitating nature. Instead, both are so well composed of different parts of natural things that they actually create something entirely new.[40]

Using the figure of the chimera, Pallavicino plays with both the creative (positive) and the deceptive (negative) connotations of 'fantasy.' On the one hand, he recommends that the prostitute deceive and simulate false illusions.[41] On the other hand, he uses the term *chimerizare* satirically, linking it with fundamental questions of artistic design.[42] In the first lesson of the *La Retorica delle Puttane*, for instance, he recommends following 'truths and verisimilitudes' (*vere e veresimili*)—a common rule in art theory and poetics.[43] He also suggests that depending on her needs, the prostitute embody the opposite of "truths and verisimilitudes."[44] The prostitute should invent a credible narrative around her profession with the aim of maximizing profits. A pretty woman with good manners, for instance, may tell a heart-rending story of impoverishment to disguise her financial interest.[45] By maintaining a probabilistic appearance, a façade of devoutness and modesty, she projects the image of the unfortunate beauty being saved by a wealthy client.[46]

Traditionally, depicting the probable was a fundamental condition of poetics.[47] Pallavicino relativized this by advising prostitutes to follow and counter it at the same time—for example, when it comes to payment.[48] In doing so, he reduces a key problem of art theory—the question of how to depict truths and probabilities—to absurdity.

Despite an ambiguous and satirical use of *chimera* and *chimerizare*, the terms clearly refer to concepts of creativity and artistic invention. Comparable to Vincenzo Danti's confrontation of the arts and chimeras, which both prove capable of composing something entirely new out of parts of different natural things, the ideas prostitutes invent are derived from various models.[49]

Like a practitioner of the fine arts, a prostitute imitates nature and fashions new forms of seduction from it.[50] *La Retorica delle Puttane's* concept of mimesis is an eclectic one, which derives its models of imitation from a wide range of sources—that is, the most successful prostitutes one could observe in public. Public spaces, in which prostitutes could broaden and train their imagination, provided an inexhaustible source of inspiration. In fact, in the best tradition of art theory, the novice in prostitution would choose the most appealing and useful features from a group of exemplary prostitutes in order to combine them into new forms of seduction.[51]

In sum, Pallavicino uses *chimerizare* to mean the ability to create something new or never seen before. His work describes the creative process, from the intellectual generation of an idea to its practical realization. More specifically, *chimerizare* also refers to the prostitute's method of invention, namely inventing what she believes her client's imagined sexual desires to be. *Chimerizare* also implies performing men's assumed sexual fantasies. The prostitute's poetic power lies in this ability to embody sexual drives. Thereby, Pallavicino explains the origin of sexual desires and their fulfillment by means of representation (by the prostitute) and sensual perception (by her client) and, in this way, declares it a matter of perception in terms of *aisthesis*. He illustrates this in his satirical interpretation of the ancient anecdote of the she-bear and her young, suggesting to the prostitute to "imagine (or feign) herself" as both the she-bear and the she-bear's "lump of flesh." "The she-bear shapes herself with her tongue and, in doing so, attains perfect form."[52]

The Topos of the She-Bear: Love, Creation and Sex

This interest in the bear's birth was based on a misinterpretation of a passage originating in Aristotle's *History of Animals* in which one reads, "the newly born cub of the she-bear is . . . smooth and blind, and its legs and most of its organs are as yet inarticulate."[53] Based on this, Pliny and others assumed that the unshaped cub was formed solely through the mother bear's licking.[54] This interpretation was popular throughout the Middle Ages up to the Early Modern period, when it was applied to such various fields as writing on art, popular literature and Marian and love imagery.[55]

In the fourteenth century, the topos was used to illustrate the virgin birth of Jesus Christ (Figure 6.2). Analogizing the she-bear's tongue to speech (*os*), the Viennese Dominican Franz von Retz (also known as Franciscus de Retza; 1343–1427), in his *Defensorium inviolatae virginitatis beatae Mariae* (In Defense of the Unviolated Virginity of the Blessed Mary), argues that the archangel Gabriel was able to maintain Mary's virginity during the conception of Christ just as the bear shapes its young with its tongue.[56] Both the she-bear's licking and the archangel's words have the power to generate or manipulate the shape of the material world.

The figure of the she-bear and her cub was also known in humanistic contexts. The fifth-century treatise on hieroglyphs by Horapollo, rediscovered in 1419, compared the formation of a bear's young with the formation of man. The licking bear became known as a hieroglyphic depiction of a man who is born misshapen but later receives a normal form.[57] Accordingly, in the earliest French emblem book, Guillaume de la Perrière's (1499–1565) *Le theatre des bons engins* (*c.* 1539), emblem 98 compares the bear's licking with the process of civilizing a human being through education.[58] The picture of emblem 98 shows one of the first printed depictions of the she-bear licking her young (Figure 6.3). Similarly, the licking bear in emblem 43 of Denis Lebey de Batilly's (1551–1607) collection of *Emblemata* (1596) represents the cultivation of the mind through education (Figure 6.4).[59] Bear and cub are set in a more elaborate landscape, which echoes the comparison of nature and art by contrasting a forest in the countryside with a fortified city in the background. This

imagery positions the licking bear at the convergence of body, creation, formation and art.

Vrſa ſi p nares/fetus emꝛa claꝛet·
Quaꝛe dubitaꝛes·q̄ x̄o non geneꝛaꝛet·
Mag gebeꝛn eim beꝛm/oſ̄ jꝛ naſen ſlunt vn
neꝛieꝛet/ Alſo ká got mit gewaltes ſpn ſin mu
ter behalten vnentert·
Alan⁹ de planctu natuꝛe ꝑſa pꝛima dicit
Vꝛſa p poꝛtas naꝛium fetus emꝛa·Deforꝛmes
ip̄as ſtilo lingue crebri⁹ lāb̄etis monetās me
liorem deducebat in forꝛmā ·Hec verba alam
vt ſupꝛa Dicit emm Iſidoꝛ⁹ li·xij·c ·ij ·Vꝛſus
oꝛe ſuo foꝛmat vetus·demq̄ tꝛiceſimo die ge
neꝛat² Vñ euemt vt p̄cipitata fecūditaſ in foꝛ
mis ꝓceꝛeat²·carne em q̄nda animata naſci di:
cūt·ſ̄ mateꝛ lābiēdo tꝛāſſoꝛmat in mēbꝛa ꝛc̄
Vꝛſon caput eſt inualidū·ſ̄ foꝛtioꝛes ſunt in
bꝛachijs·multā habes de vꝛſis mateꝛiā·q̄m
pugnant otꝛa thauꝛos ·poꝛcos ⁊ equos mel
comedūt ⁊ aꝛbon fꝛuct⁹ Cāceo etiā et foꝛmi
cas in cuꝛa infirmitatis Reg̃ꝛe li·ren decimo
octauo·ca·Vꝛſus eſt vocatus·

Figure 6.2 Franz von Retz, *Defensorium inviolatae virginitatis Mariae*, redaction C (Basle: Johann and Conrad Hist, *c.* 1484), 218v: vignette, woodcut. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, no. 4 Inc.s.a. 644, urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb00027055-2.

Figure 6.3 Guillaume de la Perrière, *Le theatre des bons engins* (Paris: Denis Janot, 1539), 97v: vignette of Emblem 98, woodcut. Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, M: Lm 2057.

As mentioned above, the topos of the she-bear and her young was also a metaphor used in love literature. The Paduan humanist Sperone Speroni (1500–88), for instance, used the carnal unity of the she-bear and her young in his *Dialogo dell'Amore* (Dialogue of Love) (1543) to depict the compatibility of spiritual and physical love.[60] Speroni explains that the she-bear's mind guides her tongue; licking is linked to a mental process that connects body and mind. Only the bear's intellectual tongue is able to form the unshaped young (her own flesh) and to perfect it.[61] In his conception of absolute love, the bear's licking represents the meaningful unity of body and mind. Mere physical love remains raw just as mere spiritual love remains without substance; both forms of love need each other for meaningful consummation. Only through the union of body and mind can untamed carnal desires be cultivated and shaped, thereby leading to the creation of sensuous experiences.[62]

Dionyſij Lebei-Batillij Emblemata.

XLIII.

AD IACOB. COVETIVM, PAC. TH

Lambendo informem velut vrſa reducere fœtum
Paulatim in formam, quantam habet ipſa, valet.
Sic vim animi innatam ingenuæ vis promouet artis
Roborat et mentem cultus et ingenium.

M 2 AD PET.

Figure 6.4 Denis Lebey de Batilly, *Emblemata* (Frankfurt: Theodore de Bry, 1596). Theodore de Bry after Jean Jacques Boissard, Vignette of emblem 43, copperplate. Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, M: Uk 35.

Concionatorum munus.

Vos mentes fingite linguâ.

Qvalis informem genitrix refingens
Quem priùs luci dedit vrſa partum,
Ore confuſos faciliáque linguâ
Digerit artus:
Talis, informi malè nata partu
Pignora agreſti nemorum receſſu
Præco diuinus renouata linguæ
Munere format.
Cernis? en cultu rediere mores:
Efferos turbæ poſuêre ritus:
Pulchra virtutis facies renidet,
Vindice linguâ.
Hæc poteſt, cælo miſerante, apertos
Reddere abſterſis oculos tenebris:
Hæc ſacræ lucis iubar æuiternum
Pandere menti.
Pergite ô vaſtum, Socij, per orbem,
Et rudes doctâ recreate linguâ:
Pergite æterno ſimilem Parenti
Fingere prolem.

Figure 6.5 Johannes Bolland (*et al.*), *Imago primi saeculi Societatis Iesv a provincia Flandro-Belgica eivsdem Societatis repraesentata* (Antwerp:

Balthasar I Moretus, 1640), 465: vignette by Cornelis I Galle, copperplate. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Res/2 Jes. 12, urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10869378-5.

Otto van Veen's emblem 29 (Figure 6.1) discussed above simplifies this imagery of perfect love by reducing it to a configuration of love that grows over time. The bear's licking is no longer used to refer to love as an absolute union of body and mind but to the manipulative power of courtship as a union of intellect and sensuality (with sexual allusions). The anecdote of the she-bear and her young became an image of successful seduction in the context of love.

The context of persuasion comes full circle with contemporaneous Jesuit rhetoric. Cornelis Galle the Elder's copperplate of the she-bear licking its cub (Figure 6.5) in Johannes Bolland's handbook of Jesuit imagery, *Imago primi saeculi Societatis Iesv* (Image of the First Century of the Society of Jesus), reprises the picture of the bear and her young in a landscape known from the sixteenth-century emblem books discussed above.[63] Here the topos of the she-bear licking her cub figures as an emblem of how the community may be persuaded by the cleric's rhetoric (tongue).

In Pallavicino's satirical narration of the topos, the bear's licking parallels persuasion. Ironically, the bear's tongue questions oration as a central feature of rhetoric and alludes to the prostitute's sexual qualities.[64] Beyond these satirical implications, the topos' variation in *La Retorica delle Puttane* deals with the metaphor of the she-bear in an intellectual context, as is the case in Speroni's *Dialogue of Love*. However, instead of the idea of perfect love between two people, *La Retorica delle Puttane* treats the idea of intentionally creating erotic desire. While Speroni's creative 'licking' refers to the spiritual cultivation of physical love, Pallavicino's stresses the artificial process of creating illusionary love or desire.[65] Sincere feelings would threaten a prostitute's financial profit.[66] Thus her authenticity and credibility are conditioned by a constant adjusting to and even anticipating of the client's desires.

As previously mentioned, in Pallavicino's version of the metaphor, the she-bear does not have a cub; rather, the bear shapes herself into form and, out of it, is able to create something new. In the process, *La Retorica delle Puttane* ties the topos of the she-bear to the genesis of creativity and art.

This opens Pallavicino's parody to questions of artistic creation that can be traced back to Venetian seventeenth-century art literature.[67]

Since antiquity, the anecdote of the she-bear and her young has been known in art literature as a metaphor for the time-consuming task of rewriting involved in writing a text.[68] In the context of art-theoretical questions of imitation, Titian uses it in his impresa *Natura potentior ars* (Art improves nature), which Battista Pittoni and Lodovico Dolce published in their collection of *Imprese* (1562) (Figure 6.6). The accompanying text by Titian's friend Dolce stresses the superiority of Titian's artistic creation over nature.[69] In this context, the bear licking its cub represents art itself, which competes with and completes the work of nature. In his handbook of symbols, *Iconologia* (1603), Cesare Ripa (ca. 1555–1622) mentions the she-bear as an example of invention.[70] In short, in the context of art making, the topos of the she-bear examines the relation between art and nature, artist and creation.

Pallavicino's interpretation of the she-bear theme stresses the moment of artistic creation, as the prostitute is able to create new forms/shapes of seduction from her own self. In the context of sixteenth-century art literature, the choice of the topos points to the idea of the prostitute as an artist who forms herself—her physical shape—into an image.[71] Reversing both the topos of living sculptures and the topos of artworks as lovers, Pallavicino's interpretation is exaggerated in *La Retorica delle Puttane* in a section on coitus, in which he criticizes overly passionate prostitutes who may confuse their clients' bodies with blocks of marble by reminding them of the vulnerability of the human body: "It is almost as if you were working around a block of marble and moving yourself with such impetuous violence around it that you could sometimes damage your lover, but it is human flesh with delicate limbs."[72] Just like the sculptor who works in stone, the prostitute's art of persuasion lies in being able to materialize her sexual imagination through the client's body.

Figure 6.6 Battista Pittoni and Lodovico Dolce, *Imprese di diversi prencipi, duchi, signori e d'altri personaggi et huomini letterati et illustri* (Venice: s.n., 1562), Vignette of Titian's impresa by Battista Pittoni, copperplate. Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 74.G.78.

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Furthermore, the she-bear's licking not only concerns the prostitute but also the body of her client. As she forms herself into what she believes her client's fantasy to be as reflected by her body, the physical manifestation of her imagination also affects the man's imagination. In the process, the prostitute not only shapes herself but also the man's imagination—the material of her work as a sculptor.[73] In this case, sexual desire is a product of visually manipulated stimuli. Regarding Pallavicino's concept of mimesis, the prostitute, as the artist of herself, does not imitate but produces images using her body. The question of the origin of sexual desire is left open. Instead, this model sets in motion a cycle of interaction between images, bodies and pictures in the context of production, display and perception. As a popularized representation of both artist and image, the prostitute is used here to enhance the discussion of the status of pictures and their perception. As Pallavicino points out, by using the topos of the she-

bear, the prostitute's charms not only originate in her outward appearance, but, more precisely, in her effect as an artwork.

Conclusion

Beginning in the fifteenth century, the image of the she-bear licking her young into shape became a popular pictorial representation of the cultivation, education and formation of man. Although depictions of the mother bear with her cub were quite similar to one another, they emerged in two different contexts as emblems. Firstly, from Marian to Jesuit imagery, the bear's licking represented the formative power of persuasive speech. Venetian love writings such as Speroni's *Dialogue of Love* resumes this tradition. Referring both to body and mind, the bear's tongue is no longer a metaphor, but takes on a physical quality that describes the cultivation of carnal desire. Secondly, in the context of art production, the topos of the bear licking her cub was employed to describe the difficult process of revising a text. In his *impresa* for his friend Titian, Lodovico Dolce used the idea of the bear's licking to refer to the procedural nature of art making, but transformed this into a metaphor for art itself and the rivalry between art and nature.

In this context, both Pallavicino and Van Veen play with the ambiguous meaning of the bear's tongue, referring to persuasive speech as well as sensual touch. The imagery of the licking she-bear in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries referred to processes of creation and production that involve both mind and body, the power of imagination, and the physical involvement of transferring ideas into the material world through the vivid representations of fantasies—performed by either a lover, a prostitute or an artist.

Known as a pictorial emblem of education and cultivation, the licking bear is used by Otto van Veen in his bestseller *Amorum emblemata* to link art literature with love literature on a pictorial level; *La Retorica delle Puttane* sharpens this imagery. Describing prostitution as a form of image creation through the embodiment of sexual desire, Pallavicino's concept of the chimera connects fantasy with the intellectual task of invention and composition in the artistic process. Thus, prostitution (as a satirical idea of perfected love) was considered to be a form of artistic production and display. Accordingly, the prostitute, as both an ideal lover and artist,

presents herself as a projection screen for desires which simultaneously model her. Her appearance is not a passive response to a client's demands but, as a product of her art, is used to create images. The anecdote of the she-bear links this imagery of seduction and persuasion with embodiment as an aesthetic technique. In Pallavicino's original usage, the iconography of the licking bear is explicitly sexualized, whereas, in van Veen's *Amorum emblemata*, it is transposed into the context of courtship. In this way, the link between creativity and sexuality characteristic of Renaissance culture manifests itself in the imagery of the art of love.

Notes

1 Vaenius (1608, 56): "Time gradually completes a *neglected* love. It is reported that the mother handles the new bear by licking and gradually forming it with its mouth. This is also the case with the lover, whose flatteries and compliance gently softens his mistress, though she be cruel and rough." Translations, unless otherwise indicated, are by the author.

2 Manning (2002, 169–76) and Stronks (2012).

3 For this analysis, I referred to a copy of this edition in Latin, Italian and French, held by the Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, Paris, no. 4-TE-56. Hollstein (1949, 7) and Landwehr (1970, no. 693); for the edition in Latin, Italian, and French, no. 694; Praz (1975, 106–7). See also, with further references, Buschhoff (2004, 17–20). See also the English verses of the Latin, English and Italian edition of 1608, "The beare her young-ones doth to shape by licking bring, / Which at the verie first but lumps of flesh are thoght, / So by kynd louing artes loue is to fassion broght, / How so at first it seem a strange vnformed thing." Landwehr (1970, no. 696).

4 *Perpolit incultum paullatim tempus amorem.*

5 Pliny the Elder (1855–7, vol. 2, 305–6) (8.54.126): "Hi sunt candida informisque caro . . . sine oculis, sino pilo; ungues tantum prominent. hanc lambendo paulatim figurant." ("When first born, they [the cubs] are shapeless masses of white flesh . . . their claws alone being prominent. The mother then licks them gradually into proper shape.")

6 See note 15 below.

7 See especially Porteman (1996), Montone (2003), Buschhoff (2004), Manning (2002, 169–70), and Stronks (2012).

8 Praz (1975, 106–7) and Buschhoff (2004, 66).

9 See, for further references on the study of love emblem books, Buschhoff (2004, 21–48); and for twentieth-century historiography of emblems in general, Becker (1996, 176).

10 Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia,* 35.43.151.

11 Wolf (1999).

12 Freedberg (1989, 333–38).

13 See especially Finucci (2001), Begemann and Wellery (2002), Goldberg (2009), Pfisterer (2014a), and Pfisterer (2014b).

14 Manning (2002, 167–8) and Stronks (2012, 63–6).

15 Suthor (2004, 15–27), Bexte (2008), Pfisterer (2011, 226–8), Nichols (2013, 118–19) and Sass (2016, 262–70).

16 For Renaissance employment of the topos of the she-bear and her young in macaronic literature, see Spackman (1991). On the topos in *La Retorica delle Puttane*, see Filzmoser

(2014, 38–44).

17 See note 13 above.

18 Turner (2003, 85–97); see for further references Turner (2006) and Filzmoser (2014, 31–50).

19 Pfisterer (2012a), Pfisterer (2012b).

20 Pino (1960) and Dolce (1960). Rosen (2009, 149–59). For Dolce, see note 39 below.

21 Pallavicino (1992), *passim*.

22 Ficino (1987, 3.3). See Leinkauf (2009).

23 In her edition of Pallavicino's *La retorica delle puttane*, Coci gives a concordance between Pallavicino's and Soarez's books; Pallavicino (1992), 191–8. See also, with further references, Turner (2003), particularly 72–8; Zandrino (2003), 93, 101–10; Fasoli (2012).

24 Turner (2003, 31).

25 For Pallavicino's life, see also, with further references, Coci's, introduction to Pallavicino (1992, ix–cxix, ci–cv, lxi–lxxx), Muir (2007, 63–107) and Gareffi (2014).

26 Pallavicino described the etymology of the Barberini family's name as "the barber who cut the beard of Christ" and, among other things, accused Pope Urban VIII Barberini of using the Wars of Castro and his intrigues to increase the Barberini family's influence in Italy. Muir (2007, 86–90).

27 On prostitution in early modern Venice, Jones (2010) and Ruggiero (2011).

28 On ideas of seduction in Renaissance culture ("amor cortigiano"), see also, with further reading, Henry (2010), Kohl *et al.* (2014) and Steigerwald (2014, 266–74).

29 Lausberg (1998, 21–2, §38).

30 See, for instance, Pallavicino (1992, 24–25): ". . . e chi si vende fa che si venda a gusto e discrezione del compratore: l'avere similmente per oggetto il guadagno dimostra la necessità di piegarsi in tutte le forme e aggiustarsi in tutti quei gradi onde può trarsi riguardevole avanzo" ("the necessity to bend oneself in all the forms and adjust oneself in all the degrees that can be to one's considerable advantage"). Turner (2003, 77) notes that *gradi* ("degree") ambiguously refers to both (the client's) social status as well as sexual positions.

31 Pallavicino (1992).

32 Blumenberg (1981). For Pallavicino's philosophical training in Padua, notably under the Aristotelian scholar Giacomo Zabarella, see Zandrino (2003, 106–7).

33 Pallavicino (1992, 29).

34 Pallavicino (1992, 22).

35 Pallavicino (1992, 22; 29).

36 Horace, *Ars poetica*, vv. 1–9.

37 Chastel (1980) and Thimann (2002, 44–8; 54–7). The second edition of the Florentine *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, Accademia della Crusca (1623, 177) defines chimera as a representation of invention, "Mostro favoloso: appresso di noi invenzion fantastica." In contrast, in the entry "orco," the mythical creature was treated as a monster (ibid., 562). On the relation of mimesis and imagination in Renaissance art writing, see Kemp (1977).

38 Battisti and Alessio (1951, vol. 2, 901). The Florentine Accademia della Crusca did not add the verb *chimerizzare*, meaning "immaginarsi cose vane, Stillarsi il cervello," to its dictionary until the eighteenth century. Accademia della Crusca (1729–38, vol. 1, 477).

39 Dolce, *Dialogo, nel quale si ragiona delle qualità, diversità, e proprietà de i colori* (Venice: Sessa, 1565), reprinted in Dolce (1913, 119). Also, in his *Dialogo della Pittura*, he quotes the introductory verses on invention from Horace's *Ars poetica*. Dolce (1960, 167–8). Similarly, Cristoforo Sorte uses *chimerizzare* in the polemic preface of his treatise *Osservazioni nella pittura*, printed in 1580 in Venice. Sorte (1960, 273).

40 Danti (1960, 235): ". . . l'arte del disegno può . . . tutte le cose che si veggiono imitare o veramente ritrarre; e non solamente le cose celesti e naturali, ma l'artifiziali ancora di qual si

voglia maniera; e, che è più, può fare nuovi composti e cose che quasi parranno tal volta dall'arte stessa ritrovate: come sono le chimere, sotto le quali si veggiono tutte le cose in modo fatte che, quanto al tutto di loro, non sono imitate dalla natura, ma sì bene composte parte di questa e parte di quella cosa naturale, facendo un tutto nuovo per sé stesso." (". . . the art of design . . . can imitate and truly portray all things that can be seen; and not only celestial and natural things, but also artefacts of whatever kind they may be; and, what is more, it can make new compounds and things that seem sometimes almost invented by art itself: such as chimeras, which in their entirety are not imitated from nature, but composed partly of this, partly of that natural thing, making up a whole which itself is new.") Translated in Klein (1966, 101).

41 Pallavicino (1992, 22).

42 Pallavicino (1992, 22).

43 Pallavicino (1992, 22). Zantwijk (2009).

44 Pallavicino (1992, 22).

45 Pallavicino (1992, 43).

46 Pallavicino (1992, 44).

47 See Lausberg (1998, 515, §1180). See Thimann's discussion of the term *favole* in sixteenth-century art writing: Thimann (2002, 43–73).

48 Pallavicino (1992, 45).

49 See note 40 above.

50 See e.g. Pallavicino (1992, 24).

51 Pallavicino (1992, 29).

52 "Fingetevi la massa informe dell'orsa, a cui ora, dandosi con la lingua distinzione di membra, s'aggiunge anche perfetta forma." Pallavicino (1992, 26).

53 Aristotle (1984, vol. 1, 908).

54 See note 5 above, Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, 8.54.126; e.g., Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 15.379–81; Ambrose, *Hexameron*, VI, 4; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, 12.2.22.

55 Hünemörder (2002).

56 Franciscus de Retza, *Defensorium inviolatae virginitatis beatae Mariae* (Basel: Johann and Conrad Hist, *c.* 1484), n.p. See Strauch (1937) and Henkel and Schöne (1976, 441–3).

57 Horapollo (1595, II, 112, no. 83): "Hominem, qui initio quidem informis natus sit, sed postea formam acceperit, innuunt depicta ursa praegnante. Haec namq[ue] sanguinem primum condensatum [et] concretum parit, hunc postea propriis fovens foemoribus, efformat, linguaq[ue] lambens perficit." ("How a man who is at first deformed. When they would symbolize a man born deformed at first, but that afterwards acquired his proper shape, they delineate a pregnant bear, for it brings forth (a mass of) thick and condensed blood, which is afterwards endued with life by being warmed between its thighs, and perfected by being licked with its tongue.") Horapollo (1840, 137). See Praz (1975, 106).

58 La Perrière (1539), fol. 98r.

59 Denis Lebey de Batilly, *Emblemata* (Frankfurt: Theodore de Bry, 1596), no. 43. Landwehr (1972), no. 399.

60 Speroni's *Dialogo dell'Amore* takes place between the historical figures Tullia d'Aragona, a Roman courtesan; her lover, the poet Bernardo Tasso; and the mediators Nicolò Grazia and Francesco Maria Molza. Grazia defends the compatibility of spiritual and physical love. Sperone Speroni, *Dialoghi* (Venice, 1560). For a modern edition, see Possi (1996, 511–63).

61 Speroni, *Dialoghi,* 19–20. See Suthor (2004, 21–7).

62 Suthor (2004, 21–2).

63 Praz (1975, 380) and Manning (2002, 195–6).

64 Pallavicino stresses this in the fifteenth lesson. Treating speech and facial expression, he attaches less importance to content than vocal sound. See Pallavicino, *Retorica,* 87–92. Cf.

Turner, *Schooling Sex*, 84, who points out the analogy of tongue and kiss.

65 Pallavicino (1992, 27).

66 Pallavicino (1992, 29); see also ibid., 68–75. Therefore (75), a prostitute had to protect herself against the powerful effects of love ("violenze di Cupido") by always bearing money and profit in mind ("si tratti in guisa che s'avventi la mano all'oro prima di volere por piede nel cuore").

67 Sperone already used art-theoretical imagery to describe the embodiment of love. See Suthor (2004, 22).

68 Suetonius' *Vita Vergili* is the first known work to connect the topos of the she-bear and her young with art. Suetonius (1914, 454–5): "Cum 'Georgica' scriberet, traditur cotidie meditatos mane plurimos versus dictare solitus ac per totum diem retractando ad paucissimos redigere, non absurde carmen se ursae more parere dicens et lambendo demum effingere." ("When he was writing the 'Georgics,' it is said to have been his custom to dictate each day a large number of verses which he had composed in the morning, and then to spend the rest of the day in reducing them to a very small number, wittily remarking that he fashioned his poem after the manner of a she-bear, and gradually licked it into shape.") For the reception of the topos in Early Modern literature, see Wilson-Okamura (2010, 101–2); for art literature, see note 15 above.

69 Pittoni and Dolce (1562), Titian's impresa, (not paginated). For discussions of the motto, see note 15 above.

70 Ripa (1603, 240).

71 Turner (2003, 85–7). This is reminiscent of contemporaneous self-portraits of female artists such as Artemisia Gentileschi's self-portrait in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle, who depicted herself as both an artist and as a personification of *pittura* (painting). See Kruse (2009).

72 Pallavicino (1992, 93): " ...e quasi che lavori intorno ad un marmo si muove con impetuosa violenza, che talvolta danneggia l'amante: si tratta di carne umana e di membra delicatissime . . ." For the topos of living sculptures, see Hinz (1989); and, most recently, on classical rhetorics and the *enargeia* (vividness) of artworks, Eck (2015, 32–43).

73 Cf. Turner (2003, 85).

7 The ‘Power of Women’ and the Post-Coital Man

Tatiana C. String

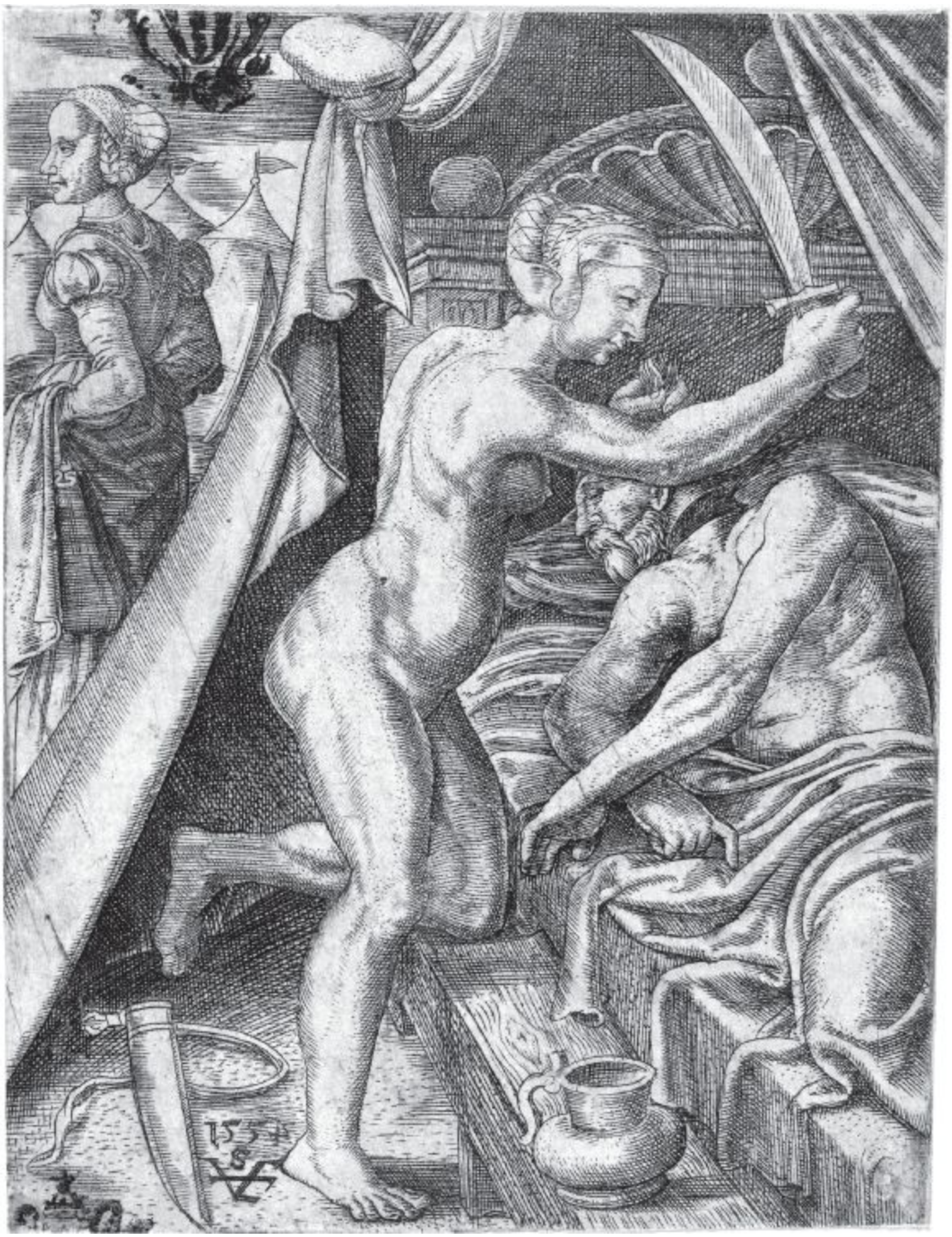

Figure 7.1 Johannes Ladenspelder, *Judith and Holofernes*, 1554, engraving, 109 × 84 mm. London: British Museum, 1866m 1013.905.

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Johannes Ladenspelder's 1554 image of Judith beheading Holofernes (Figure 7.1) is a remarkable, but not wholly unique, representation of one of the most popular subjects in the pictorial narratives that cluster around the theme of the 'Power of Women', images intended to demonstrate the consequences of allowing women, through a number of inventive means, to gain the upper hand over their male counterparts in a world whose gender hierarchies have been turned upside down. Judith is one of the most frequently revisited protagonists in these narratives of inversion, along with Salome, Delilah, Jael, Phyllis and a number of other classical, literary, and biblical women who, through a variety of forms of deception and seduction, induce in their male 'others' vulnerability where there was once power and reason. Susan L. Smith, H. Diane Russell and Christa Grössinger, amongst others, have written extensively about the 'Power of Women' as a potent literary and visual topos, a theme developed in the Middle Ages and codified in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, especially through the use of the new medium of printing in numerous series by artists and writers.[1]

In this chapter, I intend to concentrate on a few specific elements that emerge within the 'Power of Women' images in the sixteenth century, the effect of which is to render their misogynistic messages especially explicit, in the process taking the topos to a new level of critique of women's supposed lustful and deceitful behaviour and exposing the male body to frightening possibilities. While the representations of the protagonists in the 'Power of Women' cycles have been studied in depth from a variety of theoretical and historiographical perspectives, their male 'victims' have received less attention, especially from art historians. It is evident that new iconographic solutions to the subject of the overpowered male were needed in the wake of the growth of the popularity of this visual topos. And, as we shall discover, the recalibration of the powerful woman as a sexually potent figure in the early sixteenth century, especially in the new medium of print, resulted in the development of an iconography of the sexually overpowered man.

One important point should be made at the outset by way of orienting the discussion: by the mid-sixteenth century 'Power of Women' images had become part of a widely disseminated and thus readily recognizable genre, enabling the contemporary viewer confronted with such images to situate specific instances within wider frames of reference, or, to put it simply, to

view one and think of the many and to draw upon a familiarity with, or even a facility or expertise in, the material. Such was the popularity and ubiquity of this genre.[2] This fact has methodological implications, for it permits us to isolate and interrogate single images as representations of the larger whole. Such an approach applies, for example, to the focus of this chapter which is the representation of the male body in the corpus of 'Power of Women' images, with particular reference to the Old Testament story of Judith.

Figure 7.2 Erhard Schön, *Judith and Holofernes*, 1533, woodcut, 182 × 354 mm. Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, 133-1904.

Photo: bpk Bildagentur / Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen, Berlin / Dietmar Katz / Art Resource, NY

Johannes Ladenspelder's Judith is depicted in the act of beheading her people's mortal enemy, the Assyrian general Holofernes.[3] The action takes place, as in so many other depictions of the scene, in a tent while Holofernes is in bed. What is less common is the representation of Judith naked.[4] The term 'naked' is used deliberately here to emphasize the distinction between the absence of clothing in this image and any sense of this being a heroic 'nude' in Kenneth Clark's sense of the word; Clark identifies nakedness as a state of undress that can cause public humiliation and is somewhat indecent, while his oppositional term 'nude' is an ideal that refers to the state of undress in classical art.[5] This lexical nuance is

especially relevant to the argument of this paper, in that it draws specific attention to the actuality of the moment and the fact of the 'real person' being disrobed, rather than her being artfully idealized. She 'wears' her nudity, it can be argued along the lines of Clark's definition, for narrative purposes.

Ladenspelder's is not, however, as mentioned above, a unique representation of the disrobed Judith: we can find a naked Judith by Barthel Beham (1525),[6] by Hans Sebald Beham (1530s),[7] Jacob Binck (*c.* 1520–69),[8] Jost Amman (*c.* 1560–90),[9] Virgil Solis (*c.* 1530–62),[10] Conrad Meit (1512–14),[11] Hans Baldung Grien (1525),[12] Cranach the Elder (1537, now destroyed),[13] Jan Sanders van Hemessen (1540),[14] and, by way of demonstrating that this is not a purely northern phenomenon, Rosso Fiorentino (1535–40)[15] and Nicoletto da Modena (*c.* 1500–5),[16] among others. All these images foreground the nakedness of the protagonist as if it were an essential element of the plot and character motivation of the narrative they index. In each case, the artist makes a conscious decision to disrobe Judith. This is particularly noteworthy because the biblical text in fact explicitly describes the virtuous Judith as being ornately dressed, so here is a stark, contrastive break from the storyworld of the Old Testament narrative.[17] Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, a revision of traditional visual representations is at play here, as becomes evident from a comparison with, for example, Erhard Schön's print from 1533 (Figure 7.2), which serves as a good representative of the traditional type.[18]

Schön's is a continuous narrative that depicts the battle between Judith's people and the Assyrians; Judith's entrance into the Assyrian camp; the banquet; and the beheading scene, all against the backdrop of the cityscape of Bethulia. In this instance Judith is fully clothed in each successive appearance. The implication that emerges from this is that the viewer of the Ladenspelder-type image is invited to interpret the depiction of the naked Judith as something more than an attempt at a literal rendering of a well-known passage of text. Such an interpretation is confirmed by the fact that the nakedness of Judith is thrown into high relief when placed next to and in opposition to her clothed maidservant Abra in Hans Sebald Beham's depiction (Figure 7.3). That is to say, the viewer is thus asked to ponder the slippage between text and image and between canon and reinterpretation, while also reconsidering the motivations and narrative functions of characters who typically would not be differentiated so starkly.

In other words, Judith's nakedness alerts the viewer to the disruption to the standard depictions of this scene (as typified by the Erhard Schön image, just discussed, (Figure 7.2) and, because of the semantic noise that this disruption causes, represents an invitation to consider how Judith got that way in the first place, and why: that is to say, to project motivation and mechanisms of cause and effect analeptically, back to a point of narrative origin. The obvious implication is that she has disrobed (we are asked to understand) in order to seduce and have sexual relations with Holofernes. But why should this be? What subtexts are being articulated? In fact, is this a new twist on an old tale, or is this a case of making explicit what was always implicit within the application to this specific biblical incident of the misogynistic narrative loading of the 'Power of Women' topos?[19] Edward Lucie-Smith, in his study of eroticism and sexuality in Western art (in a chapter revealingly and aptly entitled 'Here comes a chopper') finds little ambiguity in this type of depiction. He writes rather matter-of-factly of the Cranach Judith:

> Holofernes comes to grief thanks to the power of sexuality. Cranach made this very plain in his full-length Judith, where the heroine was shown nude, but for a transparent veil, and carried Holofernes' severed head in one hand and his sword in the other: through female sexuality (so the picture tells us) Judith has succeeded in cutting off and stealing her lover's virile powers. The outsize weapon is as significant as the head itself in this pantomime of penis envy.[20]

This observation and the general acceptance of its premise, that Judith's nakedness indexes coitus, alongside the presence of Holofernes' naked body in a rumpled bed, lend support to a reading of the context of the nakedness as a sexual encounter staged to serve the woman's ends (and, it should be added, those of the compilers of 'Power of Women' illustrations).

Elena Ciletti has elegantly demonstrated the shift in emphasis in the sixteenth century from the virtuous heroine to the naked seductress, illustrating her point with a representation (Figure 7.4; thought to be after Lucas van Leyden) of prostitution (and man's folly) in which the explicitly sexual encounter in the immediate foreground is paralleled by a roundel of Judith with the head of Holofernes adorning the elaborate bed at the center of the composition.[21]

The juxtaposition of the scenes of seduction and deception and the elision of their meaning serve to assimilate Judith with this naked prostitute and leave no doubt as to the identification of Judith as a dangerous woman who has seduced and then overpowered and emasculated her male partner. That

is to say, the main thrust of the biblical narrative on a straightforward reading (Judith as God's instrument saving the Hebrew people from the might of the Assyrian army, and Holofernes simply being drunk when he was decapitated) has long since been allowed to recede into the contextual background to the point that this story can take its place within the genre of admonitory representations of the dangers of the inversion of patriarchy.

Figure 7.3 Hans Sebald Beham, *Judith and her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes*, 1531–50, engraving, 114 × 71 mm. London, British

Museum, 1845,0809.1209.

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Figure 7.4 After Lucas van Leyden, *Prostitution* (*The Old Man and the Courtesan*), *c.* 1520–50, etching, 176 × 139 mm. London, British Museum, AN41278001.

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This brings us directly to the challenge of interpreting the naked body of Holofernes in what we can now confidently read as an overtly carnal scene. Scholars have tended to concentrate so heavily on Judith's varieties of expressions, positions and states of mind in images of this type that Holofernes has tended to be overlooked. And yet, because of the reinterpretation in the sixteenth century of the Judith narrative as a sexualized moralizing tale, his representation is an opportunity to view a new type of nude male body and study it both in terms of its narrative moment and as the occasion or locus for a new iconographic vocabulary. In particular, we find in Ladenspelder's image a site of debilitation and defeat that represents a challenge to culturally normative and dominant ideas about the male body as a site of control and virility. What was once an erect, energetic, powerful body—a Laocoön or Hercules type—has been reduced to a limp, spent, sprawling, lifeless mass. It is made to contrast not only with Judith's power, but its own former self-possession and independence. What was, just moments before within the narrative logic of the depicted moment, the body at its most masculine—in the act of coitus—is now entirely emasculated. It is noteworthy that the post-coital flacidity of the male member is particularly referenced by the limpness of Holofernes' right forefinger. This displacement or projection is very comparable to the way in which Botticelli suggestively positions Mars' right hand in the well-known *Venus and Mars* (*c.* 1485), a work Patricia Simons has discussed in precisely this post-coital context in her recent book *The Sex of Men in Premodern Europe* (2011).[22] In fact, the Ladenspelder *Judith and Holofernes* image is littered with references to intercourse: one notes that the tubular folds of the bedsheets strongly suggest the flaccidity of the discharged penis; and the scabbard, so prominently positioned, both evokes a discarded prophylactic sheath, of the sort known to be used at that time, and for the viewer literate in Latin puns on Judith's vagina (*vagina* is Latin for scabbard). Holofernes has not only experienced ejaculation, but has let his orgasm disarm him to the point where he has been murdered in his post-coital sleep. What a sanguine reminder this image would have been to its male viewers of the dangers of lust.

In addition, the emphasis on the body and on its disarticulation through beheading makes the further point about a type of castration here. The body is no longer a masculine whole. The main source of masculine power—his head—has been removed, and the fear encouraged in the viewer is that the

other principal source of that power, his penis, is also being referred to.[23] It should also be noted that Barthel Beham hints at this deconstruction or dismemberment of the body, with torso, arm and head seemingly disarticulated and scattered indiscriminately as a consequence of Judith's overpowering of it (Figure 7.5). The emphatic message in this and cognate images is, therefore, that this powerful body could never have been made vulnerable if the male had not been weakened by his lust (and by the female's deception).

What is especially noteworthy about the Ladenspelder image is the extent to which the artist provides a full account of the setting for the decapitation, rather than resorting to the kind of shorthand that is evident within some of the other images, for example where Judith is shown simply holding head and sword, or, as in the case of Barthel Beham's rendering (Figure 7.5), where Judith sits on her defeated foe. Again, rather than foregrounding the heroic act of divinely sanctioned assassination, in the Ladenspelder print we encounter the mundane detritus of a recent sexual encounter, complete with disarranged bed and rumpled sheets, and the discarded weapon that Judith now picks up and uses. Metaphors of sex as battle and duel are evoked, as is the powerful link between sex and death. It has long been supposed that after a man ejaculates, he dies a form of death, whence the phrase *la petite mort*.[24] With this in view, it is not a great stretch to find an artist such as Ladenspelder conflating the death of Holofernes with a sort of post-coital snooze, to use the modern colloquialism.

Figure 7.5 Barthel Beham, *Judith and Holofernes*, 1525, engraving, 55 × 37 mm. London, British Museum, 1892m0411.16

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The motifs that we have identified carry over into a number of representations that emphasize the same post-coital Holofernes, while Judith is—to varying degrees—clothed. A print formerly attributed to Giulio Romano (Figure 7.6) presents the naked, vulnerable male body even more explicitly as it lies on the unmade bed with limp genitalia exposed. And perhaps one of the best known depictions of Holofernes' body is that by Michelangelo in one pendentive of the Sistine ceiling (Figure 7.7).

As in the Giulio Romano image, even in the representations in which Judith is shown with clothing, a strong element of sexual content can be retained. Michelangelo has invested the male body with a powerful erotic resonance not only evident from the parted legs that suggest genitalia (and make implicit reference to the sublimated castration that has been committed). In addition, if we consider the evidence for Michelangelo's original intentions for this composition, as suggested by the preliminary working drawing for the scene (Figure 7.8), we can see that he initially proposed a clearer view of the severed body but then reversed it to draw greater attention to the sexual organ while occluding the trauma to the neck, which remains in shadow.

What do all these images have in common? More specifically, are there neologisms in the visual vocabulary of post-coitus that we can identify? The setting in each of these depictions is very consistent: an unmade bed, clothes and armour discarded, all the debris of what must be inferred to have been a physically energetic sexual encounter. The emphasis on the bed must, I would argue, represent an intentional indexing of the sexual dimension of these images; the bed is increasingly—in the sixteenth century—an essential element in depictions of intimate relations. For example, the lovemaking scenes in the woodcuts accompanying Piero Pacini's edition of Piccolomini's *Hystoria di due amanti* (*c.* 1500) take place in beds; in all the *I Modi* woodcuts the bed is the setting for the numerous sexual positions illustrated; similarly, Tintoretto's *Venus and Mars discovered by Vulcan* takes place in a contemporary bedroom with an unmade bed in the immediate foreground,[25] as well as countless portrayals of the *Loves of the Gods*, many of which are set on beds. The bed in the Ladenspelder image is especially foregrounded, and, it should be pointed out, somewhat out of keeping with its position in a tent. This is a large, heavy, wooden piece; the

type more commonly found in domestic interiors. In several images Holofernes' legs are parted with one knee up; his head is typically thrust back (which is convenient for having it struck off by Judith); his arm is often behind the head or one hand rests near his groin with a limp, lifeless phallic finger particularly evident; and his soft penis is almost invariably exposed or emphasized.[26] To understand the cumulative loading of such details, one has only to compare them with, for example, Botticelli's *Venus and Mars*, which has long been read as a post-coital image, or the Barberini Faun from the first century BC, now in the Munich Glyptothek.[27] It should be noted that this work could not have served as a direct source of inspiration as it was only unearthed in the seventeenth century, but it is nonetheless useful in identifying those motifs most insistently associated with representing the state of post-ejaculation slumber.[28]

Figure 7.6 After Giulio Romano (Formerly thought to be by Adamo Ghisi), *Judith and Holofernes, c.* 1550–80, engraving, 155 × 218 mm. Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina.

© Albertina, Vienna.

Figure 7.7 Michelangelo Buonarotti, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, Sistine Chapel Ceiling, 1509.

Figure 7.8 Michelangelo, Preparatory Drawing for Sistine Judith with the Head of Holofernes, *c.* 1508, black chalk on paper, 404 × 225 mm. Haarlem, Teylers Museum, A 018 verso.

The particular interest of the Judith and Holofernes images resides in the fact that they directly challenge the status of the sexual act, and its representation, as the assertion *par excellence* of male dominance, control, power, initiative and alertness. In order to gauge the norms against which these images were reacting, one has only to consider, for example, Giulio Romano's *Modi* or 'Positions', many of which illustrate the typical 'man on top' positioning that trumpets male dominance in sexual encounters. Further demonstrations of these images' power is provided by another, perhaps studiedly ambiguous, representation attributed to Giulio Romano of what Bette Talvacchia refers to in her study of erotica in Italian Renaissance culture, *Taking Positions*, as an 'amorous scene' (Figure 7.9).[29] However, it might well be argued that this image is actually a Judith with her maidservant, at the moment of raising her right arm to behead Holofernes. The Louvre's description of this drawing is 'a naked woman killing a man lying on a bed' and they are probably right. The ambiguity of murder scene and amorous encounter is provocative. As with all of these images, the viewer is here invited to ponder the contrast between private sex and its public consequences.

Is it possible to extend this analysis to other representations from the 'Power of Women' topos, especially two other Old Testament stories, those of Jael and Sisera (Judges 4: 17–22) and of Samson and Delilah (Judges 16: 4–31), to see whether they are carriers of similar subtexts? In images of these subjects, in particular in the series by Lucas van Leyden and by Albrecht Altdorfer,[30] the apparent answer is yes: that it is possible to see beneath the clothes of these characters and read them as similarly eroticized.[31] Phallic references abound, such as the massive, solid tent peg that Jael drives into Sisera's temple, and the long, pointed scissors with which Delilah shears Samson's locks and thereby divests him of his strength. The same message emerges from the obvious notion, or plot device, that the near-inevitable fall into post-coital sleep is about the only way in which the male figure could have let his female opponent gain the upper hand. Such images suggest that the 'Power of Women' topos was a potent instrument in the hands of sixteenth-century artists, equipping them to revisit, and reconceive, narratives as seemingly culturally 'fixed' as familiar Old Testament tales, in the process re-energizing them by means of references to female power and sexual debilitation. The circumstances in which Judith presents herself to Holofernes in the Old Testament story made the inferential jump to their having sexual relations fairly straightforward, but the sexualization of their confrontation in images such as that by Ladenspelder can be seen as part of a wider pattern or programmatic applicable to those Old Testament scenes in which the sexual element is less overtly registered. This is a subject that would repay further investigation, particularly with reference to artists' explorations of male vulnerability and exploitation of male fears.

Figure 7.9 Giulio Romano (attr.), *Judith and her Maidservant with Holofernes* (?), mid-sixteenth century, 132 × 200 mm. Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des dessins, RF 512, recto.

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For as this chapter has suggested, artists in the sixteenth century were exploring new ways of rendering the eroticized body and rerouting it towards fashionable ideas about female power that played on male anxieties of sexual emasculation and social inversion. In this regard, one may note how many of these images depict the action in liminal spaces, typically a tent, half private, half accessible and public. Such locating of the scene realizes the tensions and interplay between the private and public that subtend the Judith narrative as conceived in these images: the idea that a man's public status and masculinity must be enacted, and might potentially be subverted, in the private act of sex.

Notes

1 Smith (1995), Russell and Barnes (1990) and Grössinger (1997). See also the important study of Delilah within the 'Power of Women' theme: Kahr (1972).

2 Among the 'Power of Women' cycles and examples, see especially those by Lucas van Leyden, Albrecht Altdorfer, Hans Burgkmair and Ambrosius Holbein. For the prints by Lucas van Leyden, see Hollstein (1996, 157–64, nos. 175–80): the "Large Power of Women," and *idem*., (164–70, nos. 181–6): the "Small Power of Women"; and Jacobowitz and Stepanek (1983, esp. 102–22, 164–83). For Altdorfer, see Hollstein (1997, 115), W.43 (Jael and Sisera) and Noll (2004, esp. 349–80). For the Burgkmair and Holbein examples, see Hollstein (1957b, 32, no. 5) (Samson and Delilah) and 93, no. 283 (Aristotle and Phyllis); and Hollstein (1988), 31–3, no. 7 (title page to Horatius, Epodon Liber …, Basel: P. Gengenbach, June 1517, 'The Power of Women': Samson and Delilah, Virgil and the Courtesan, Solomon in Idolatry, Aristotle and Phyllis).

3 The fullest account of representations of the Judith story is Garrard (1989). The story of Judith is the subject of a major interdisciplinary study: Brine *et al.* (2010).

4 In addition to those works cited below, there is discussion of Judith and nudity in Ciletti and Lähnemann (2010, 61) and in Carroll (1987, 364–6).

5 The discussion of 'naked' versus 'nude' in Clark (1956) has been challenged and updated in studies such as Nead (1992) and Walters (1978). For specific discussion of nakedness and the wanton biblical female, see also Miles (1989).

6 For the two Barthel Beham representations of the naked Judith, see Koch (1978, 11, nos. 2 and 3).

7 For the three representations of Hans Sebald Beham's naked Judith, see Koch (1978, 11–12, nos. 10, 11 and 12). The last of these is a reverse of Barthel Beham no. 2.

8 Koch (1980, 12, no. 7) and Hollstein (1957a, 17, no. 13).

9 Peters (1985, 429, no. 4.38).

10 Peters (1987, 18, no. 14).

11 Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum. See Eikelmann (2006).

12 Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum. See Osten (1983, 169–71, no. 56). For discussion of the sly look and cross-legged stance, see Talbot (1981), and Brinkmann (2007, 216).

13 Formerly Dresden, Gemäldegalerie. Destroyed 1945. See Friedländer and Rosenberg (1978, no. 359).

14 Art Institute of Chicago (2013, 20).

15 Los Angeles County Museum of Art; see Carroll (1987, 364–6).

16 Zucker (1980, 225, no. 2508.084), with illustration in the accompanying *Picture Atlas*, 77, no. 2.

17 Judith, 10:1–4 (Revised Standard Version): "When Judith had ceased crying out to the God of Israel, and had ended all these words, she rose from where she lay prostrate and called her maid and went down to the house where she lived on sabbaths and on her feast days; and she removed the sackcloth which she had been wearing, and took off her widow's garments, and bathed her body with water, and anointed herself with precious ointment, and combed her hair and put on a tiara, and arrayed herself in her gayest apparel, which she used to wear while her husband Manasseh was living. And she put sandals on her feet, and put on her anklets and bracelets and rings, and her earrings and all her ornaments, and made herself very beautiful, to entice the eyes of all men who might see her." As the narrative goes on to explain, on the fourth day after entering Holofernes's camp, the day of the murder, Judith once again donned this splendid attire, Judith 12:11–15: "[Holofernes said] to Bagoas, the eunuch who had charge of all his personal affairs, 'Go now and persuade the Hebrew woman who is in your care to join us and eat and drink with us. For it will be a disgrace if we let such a woman go without enjoying her company, for if we do not embrace her she will laugh at us.' So Bagoas went out from the presence of Holofernes, and approached her and said, 'This beautiful maidservant will please come to my lord and be honored in his presence, and drink wine and be merry with us, and become today like one of the daughters of the Assyrians who serve in the house of

Nebuchadnezzar.' And Judith said, 'Who am I, to refuse my lord? Surely whatever pleases him I will do at once, and it will be a joy to me until the day of my death!' So she got up and arrayed herself in all her woman's finery … ."

18 Other examples include Lucas Cranach's paintings of the scene (1531) now in Gotha; see Friedländer and Rosenberg (1978, nos. 214, 215), and Israhel van Meckenem's engraving of the subject from *c.* 1495, versions of which can be found in the British Museum, the Rijksmuseum, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas; see Hollstein (1986, 3, no. 8). Van Meckenem also produced a woodcut of the scene, one of which may be found in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; see Hollstein (1986, 4, no. 8a).

19 Bal (1987), is very helpful here in contextualizing what she refers to as the 'lethal woman' in the Bible. While she deals more directly with Delilah, much of her model can be extended to include Judith as dangerous woman. For other analyses of the misogynist treatment of Old Testament heroines, see Collins (2012) and Bach (1997).

20 Lucie-Smith (1972, 228). There is also a very substantive discussion of the rendering of Judith as sexual in Stocker (1998), as well as mention of the sexualized, naked Judith in Białostocki (1988, 113–38, esp. 124–31), Noll (2004, 351–5) and Gorsen (1980).

21 Ciletti (1991).

22 Simons (2011, 114).

23 A useful discussion of representations of the penis in western art can be found in Solomon-Godeau (1997, 177–82), in which she provides some explanation of the preference for small, pointed penises in classical, Renaissance, and neoclassical art, which stems from the Attic ideal of adolescent beauty, and Aristotle's notion that small penises were more efficient in procreation because the semen had a shorter distance to travel, thus avoiding the danger of cooling.

24 For insightful comments on sex and death in the context of this discussion, see Simons (2011, 168–9) and Stocker (1998, 52–3).

25 These are all discussed and illustrated in Bayer (2008, 198–9, 200–5, 326). For a thorough exploration of Giulio Romano's *I Modi* and related erotic images, see Talvacchia (1999).

26 For the arm behind the head as an index of the iconography of sleep, especially as it relates to female figures, see Meiss (1966, 348–82); for the soft penis, see Lorentzen (2007), who notes that the penis, when "small and soft," is "felt as a danger to masculinity" (81).

27 It should be noted that the present state of the sculpture is the result of considerable restoration, but its erotic posture derives from the shape of the original components. For the history of this work since its discovery in the 1620s, see Haskell and Penny (1981, 202–5).

28 Other arguably post-coital males may include Endymion, Cephalus and Morpheus. For their representations in nineteenth-century French painting, see Solomon-Godeau (1997, 99–175).

29 Talvacchia (1999, 43–5).

30 See above, note 2.

31 I have adapted this phrase from Hollander (1980), an innovative study of the relationship between clothing and the naked bodies underneath.

8 The Double Strike

A Psychoanalytic Reading of Donatello's *Judith and Holofernes*

Angeliki Pollali

Figure 8.1 Donatello, *Judith and Holofernes, c.* 1455. Bronze, 236 cm (without base). Palazzo Vecchio, Florence. Front View.

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Judith and Holofernes (Figure 8.1) has come to represent one of most iconic works of Donatello's oeuvre. Aside from receiving extensive scholarly attention in itself, it is often included in the wider discussion of the Judith theme in western art. An undocumented commission related to the Medici family, *Judith and Holofernes* (*c.* 1455) has been the subject of numerous allegorical and political interpretations.[1] This essay does not attempt to enhance these contexts of interpretation. It proposes to address a gap between the statue's iconography and its contextual readings, focusing on the relationship of the work to the biblical narrative. Not only does Donatello's statue constitute a singular case in the entire iconography of Judith, but a number of its iconographic details have clear sexual connotations. The essay deploys psychoanalytic theory and draws on the scholarly literature of the biblical story of Judith, in turn informed by feminism and psychoanalysis. Readings of the 'text' are examined in relation to readings of the 'image.' The construction of meaning is conceived as a dynamic process of interaction between these discourses. The sculptural group per se appears to be proposing a dialogue with the biblical story, by both departing and drawing closely from it. Through the examination of the convergence and the ruptures with the biblical text, I will argue that the unique iconography of the work points to the essential structural condition of human desire, namely the unattainability of its fulfilment.

The symbolic meaning of *Judith and Holofernes* was recognized early on in scholarship. Kaufmann linked the representation of Donatello's Judith to the medieval tradition of psychomachia and viewed the statue as an allegory of the triumph of *Humilitas* over *Superbia*.[2] The allegorical meaning of the statue was further elaborated by Edgar Wind as a triumph of *Sanctimonia* over *Luxuria*.[3] Other interpretations have associated the statue with the themes of the Virgin Mary fighting the devil[4] or the combat between the *arbor bona* and the *arbor mala* in the Garden of Eden.[5] These allegorical meanings, related to the theological context of the period, have been complemented by political interpretations relevant to the Medici family. Important links in this respect are the inscriptions, which are reported to have existed on the pedestal of the statue.

While the original inscriptions do not survive, reference to them appears in fifteenth century sources.[6] The first inscription reads: "Regna cadunt luxu surgunt virtutibus urbes / caesa vides humili colla superba manu" (Realms fall through luxury, cities rise through their virtues. You see the proud neck cut by humility's hand). The second inscription, a dedication by Piero de' Medici, reads: "Salus Publica / Petrus Medices Cos[mi] fi[lius] libertati simul et fortitudini hanc mulieres statuam quo cives invicto / constantique animo ad rem publicam tuendam redderentur dedicavit" (Public Health. Piero de' Medici, son of Cosimo, dedicated this statue of a woman to union of strength and liberty, so that the citizens might be led back via an invincible and constant spirit to the defense of the republic).[7]

Janson initiated the discussion of the statue's relationship to Medicean political propaganda, suggesting that luxury would have been associated with despotism, while virtue with republican government.[8] Sarah Blake McHam has linked *Judith and Holofernes* to the bronze *David* and has viewed both works as images of tyrannycide, an idea deployed by the Medici to portray themselves as defenders of Florentine liberty.[9] More specific associations have also been proposed. Laurie Schneider has identified in *Judith and Holofernes* a symbol of the Florentine struggle against the Visconti family.[10] Based on the first inscription, Roger Crum has interpreted the statue in relation to the challenges that Cosimo faced within his own party in the 1450s,[11] whereas Janson, followed by a number of scholars, has suggested that the second inscription relates to the suppression of the Pitti conspiracy by Piero de' Medici in 1466.[12]

The unique iconography of the statue has also been pointed out in scholarship.[13] Artists in the fifteenth century avoided the actual scene of execution. An example, which is usually brought forth, relates to the two versions of the theme created by Botticelli.[14] In *Return of Judith to Bethulia* (*c.* 1470) (Figure 8.2), Botticelli depicts Judith with sword in hand, followed by her maid, who carries Holofernes' head in a bag.[15] In *The Discovery of the Body of Holofernes* (*c.* 1470), Botticelli chooses the moment of discovery of the decapitated body of Holofernes by his soldiers.[16] In sculpture, *Judith* (Figure 8.3) appears in the frame of the panel of *David and Goliath* in Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise* in the Florentine Baptistery (1425–52). She holds the raised sword in one hand and Holofernes' head in the other. Donatello's version of the Judith theme is the first and only representation in monumental sculpture of the instance of

decapitation (Figure 8.1). In painting, the moment of decapitation does not appear until the well-known renderings by Caravaggio and Artemisia Gentileschi.

The singularity of the iconography of Donatello's statue, however, does not only consist in the representation of the actual scene of decapitation. Other iconographic details are unique to Donatello's rendering of the theme both in regard to the biblical story and other artistic representations. Before turning to the relationship of Donatello's statue to the biblical story, here follows an outline of the narrative.[17] Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians, being at war with Arphaxad, king of the Medes, requested, but was not granted, the help of the neighboring nations. After defeating Arphaxad, Nebuchadnezzar sent his chief general Holofernes to subjugate these peoples. Holofernes' campaign was successful until he reached Judea. The Israelites refused to surrender because they feared that the Assyrians would destroy their temples. Holofernes cut the water supply to the city, putting pressure on the elders to surrender. Judith, a beautiful, childless widow, devised a plan to defeat Holofernes and his army. She dressed up and she went to the Assyrian camp, where everyone, including Holofernes, marveled at her beauty. Judith informed Holofernes that the Israelites were about to sin—eat inappropriately because of the lack of water. Her God would reveal to her when this would happen and Holofernes would be able to conquer the Israelites, as their God would not be protecting them. Each night Judith went out of the camp to pray—an important act both for her promise to Holofernes and for her own plan. At a certain point, Holofernes decides to seduce her; he had actually wanted to do this from the moment he saw her. He invites her to his tent, but he drinks so much wine that he falls asleep. Judith kills him with his own sword and she returns home, carrying Holofernes' head in her food bag. The Assyrians did not stop her, as she was supposedly going out of the camp to pray. She never remarried and she lived to a great age.

Donatello's representation appears to follow very closely the details of the biblical narrative (Figure 8.1). For example, Judith's attire reflects the heroine's description in the story. Judith removed the sackcloth that she was wearing as a widow. She combed her hair and put on a tiara. She dressed herself in the festive attire that she used to wear when her husband was alive and she adorned herself with jewelry (10:2–3). More significantly, in the story it is stated that Judith had to strike twice to kill Holofernes: "She

went to the pillar that was at his bed's head, and loosed his sword that hung tied upon it. And when she had drawn it out, she took him by the hair of his head, and said: Strengthen me, O Lord God, at this hour. And she struck twice upon his neck, and cut off his head, and took off his canopy from the pillars, and rolled away his headless body." (13:8–10). Donatello does not merely choose to represent the instance of decapitation, but specifically its second moment. Judith has conferred the first blow (Figure 8.4) and with her raised sword she is about to strike the second fatal blow (Figure 8.5). The representation of the second moment of decapitation is unique to Donatello's statue. This singularity has even led some scholars to ascribe the gash on Holofernes' neck to a casting flaw.[18]

Figure 8.2 Sandro Botticelli, *Return of Judith to Bethulia, c.* 1470. Oil on panel, 31 × 24 cm. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi.

© Photo Scala, Florence—courtesy of the Ministero Beni e Att. Culturali.

Figure 8.3 Lorenzo Ghiberti, *Judith*, detail, *c.* 1425–52. Gilded Bronze. Museo dell' Opera del Duomo, Florence.

Photo: Archive Timothy McCarthy / Art Resource, NY.

Concurrently, Donatello's representation departs from the biblical narrative. Judith is not standing by Holofernes' bed but literally on top of him. Her left foot is stepping on his hand (Figure 8.1) and her right foot on his groin (Figure 8.5). The bodies are very closely intertwined, suggesting physical intimacy. The combination of these iconographic details—Judith standing on top of Holofernes, her stepping upon his genitalia and the double strike of the sword—are unique to Donatello's representation. There is no similar instance of such a rendering in the entire Judith iconography. In Caravaggio's representation, followed by Gentilleschi, Judith is standing by the bed and is literally cutting off Holofernes' head (Figure 8.6). She is performing the very act of decapitation and there is no distinction between its first and second moment.[19]

Figure 8.4 Donatello, *Judith and Holofernes*, detail, *c.* 1455. Bronze, 236 cm (without base). Palazzo Vecchio, Florence.

Su concessione del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali e del Turismo – Opificio delle Pietre Dure di Firenze—Archivio dei Restauri e Fotografico.

Figure 8.5 Donatello, *Judith and Holofernes, c.* 1455. Bronze, 236 cm (without base). Palazzo Vecchio, Florence. Side View.

Photo: Snark / Art Resource, NY.

Figure 8.6 Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio. *Judith and Holofernes*, 1598–9. Oil on canvas, 145 × 195 cm. Galleria Nazionale d' Arte Antica, Palazzo Barberini, Rome.

Photo: Art Resource, NY.

The significance of these details has received some consideration, but they have not been examined as a group or in relation to each other. In a recent contribution, Adrian Randolph has associated them to the statue's allegorical meaning of chastity over lust and the literary trope of psychomachia.[20] To support this interpretation, he foregoes the literal relationship between text and image. The statue is thought to bear a symbolic relation to the biblical story and not to constitute a visual counterpart of the text. Originating in ancient authors, psychomachia related to the physical struggle of abstract ideas. From the Trecento onwards, it was translated in Florentine art as the representation of one figure standing on another. The "very odd position"[21] of Judith standing on top of Holofernes

is thus to be seen as a symbolic representation relating to psychomachia and the statue's allegorical meaning. This would account for its absence in the biblical text. Additionally, Randolph observes the implausibility of the act of decapitation; if Judith were to bring down the scimitar, it would cut through her leg.[22] He reads Donatello's statue not as an illustration of the second moment of decapitation, but as a condensation of two distinct moments in the narrative: the first and the second blow. The statue thus "*stands*[23] for the biblical narrative without correlating to a precise moment in the text."[24]

The iconographic detail of Judith stepping upon Holofernes' genitalia is interpreted by Randolph as Donatello's choice to have Judith "visually and allegorically stamp out the luxurious, equated with the erotic."[25] The fact that Judith would hurt herself in conferring the second blow is read together with the intertwining of the two bodies as a sign of "an internal, psychic conflict."[26] Randolph concludes that the "symbolic significance of the victory of Judith over Holofernes is, therefore, not only an allegorical psychomachia representing Chastity's victory over Luxury, but also the rejection of rough lust represented as an internal moral struggle."[27] Judith is victorious against both Holofernes' lust and her own. The implausibility of the second strike, however, calls 'victory' itself into question. The viewer cannot help but wonder: Will Judith opt to cut through her own leg? Will she lose her stability in the process? Will Holofernes' head fall off before she herself falls down? In the discussion that follows, I intend to expand on the notions of 'symbolic representation' and 'psychic conflict,' viewing them from a psychoanalytic angle. My point of departure is that Donatello's statue relates to the second moment of decapitation. I will argue that the statue has a 'symbolic' meaning, which however does not concern lust—sexual appetite, but desire—the desire which stands at the core of human existence.

The conception of this essay drew its inspiration from Laurie Schneider's psychoanalytic interpretation of Donatello's bronze *David*, a work which has often been associated with *Judith and Holofernes*. Documentation for their commission and original location does not survive, but the earliest sources place them both in the courtyard of the Palazzo Medici.[28] Scholarly discussion has viewed them as partners in meaning, as they are both Old Testament heroes and saviors of the Jewish people.[29] Schneider's psychoanalytic reading of *David* accounts for an iconographic detail, which

cannot be easily explained through other interpretative approaches: sociopolitical or Neoplatonic. The wing, which emerges from Goliath's helmet, caresses David's thigh and reaches his buttocks. Schneider views the feather as an erotic interchange between David and Goliath, providing a Freudian analysis of the biblical story, based on the Oedipus complex.[30] Some scholars have even chosen to view the wing as a simple support of the statue. Pope-Hennessy, for instance, proposes that if seen from below "the eagle wing of Goliath's helmet would have read as what it was, a means of strengthening a vulnerable point in the structure of the statue."[31] This essay opts for the 'symbolic' in both cases. Similarly to the feather of the bronze *David*, the position of Judith on top of Holofernes combined with her proud stepping upon his genitalia and her imminent second strike invite further discussion.

In psychoanalytic terms, decapitation signifies castration. In "Medusa's head," a short paper written in 1922 and published posthumously in 1940, Freud emphatically asserts: "To decapitate = to castrate."[32] Decapitation is a symbolic castration; aggression is displaced from the phallus to the head. The 'castration complex' is one of Freud's earliest ideas; it was discussed as early as 1905 in the "Three essays on sexuality" as a crucial moment in the child's psychosexual development.[33] The little boy experiences 'castration anxiety,' anxiety that his father will castrate him, because of the former's desire for his mother. Related to the castration complex, is the notion of 'penis envy.' Also present in Freudian thinking from 1905, it was rethought and elaborated several times in later writings. In the 1908 essay "On the sexual theories of children,"[34] Freud claims that all children believe that everyone possesses a penis. Additionally, the sight of female genitalia gives rise to the idea of mutilation. For boys this realization inaugurates the fear of castration; in girls it gives rise to envy for boys who have such an 'important' organ. In his 1925 essay "Some psychical consequences of the anatomical distinction between the sexes," Freud further proposes that girls "notice the penis of a brother or playmate, strikingly visible and of large proportions, at once recognize it as the superior counterpart of their own small and inconspicuous organ, and from that time forward fall a victim to envy for the penis."[35]

Freud himself makes a specific reference to Judith in his essay "The Taboo of Virginity" (1917).[36] He does not however refer to the biblical story but to its elaboration in the play *Judith and Holofernes* by Friedrich Hebbel

(1840). Hebbel's Judith deviates from the biblical heroine. She is still a virgin as her beauty rendered her husband Manasses impotent on their wedding night and ever since. She induces Holofernes to rape her and she subsequently decapitates him. Freud brings forth this example because it fits his discussion of the taboo of virginity. This taboo, he argues, is present in primitive societies for a number of reasons: to protect future husbands from the sight of spilled blood—the 'horror of blood,' since blood was considered to be the very source of life; from the anxiety of new, unexpected, uncanny experiences; from experiencing the hostility of their future brides. Freud touches upon a number of causes for the female hostility arising from intercourse, such as pain and narcissistic injury, only to conclude with penis envy. His discussion is unclear and so is the leap to 'penis envy.'[37] The first occurrence of intercourse triggers 'penis envy.' The female wishes to castrate the male and keep the penis. Hebbel's Judith decapitates, i.e. castrates, Holofernes for the very fact that he has deflowered her.

The idea of decapitation signifying castration has dominated psychoanalytic interpretations of works of art related to the story of Judith. The use of this Freudian notion also appears in one of the earliest applications of psychoanalysis in art historical discourse. In 1976 Laurie Schneider deployed the duality of decapitation/castration to discuss two works by Caravaggio: *Medusa* and *David*.[38] Her article initiated a series of interventions, where castration constituted the central notion for the analysis of the renditions of Judith by Caravaggio and Artemisia Gentileschi, by psychoanalysts and art historians alike.[39]

Freud's analysis of Hebbel's play has in turn informed psychoanalytic readings of the biblical story of Judith. The notion of castration has constituted the cardinal point of the discussion and has been enhanced by other Freudian concepts. Margarita Stocker builds on the Freudian analysis of Hebbel's play and associates castration with the notion of the 'death wish.' Being instrumental for the formation of sexual identity, the castration complex encompasses loss and thus the fear of death. Holofernes' claim that the Israelites are responsible for their own annihilation exemplifies a reversal of his own death wish. Stocker further associates castration with fetishism. Holofernes' severed head becomes a fetish for the male audience; it is the penis which the castrated female/mother lacks.[40] In the biblical

story itself, the head also acquires the function of a totem, a 'Medusa effect,' as the Assyrians are brought to defeat by the head's very sight.[41]

What I find significant in Stocker's analysis, however, is not the Freudian reading of the biblical story based on the notions of castration, fetishism and death wish. Given her intent to propose a feminist analysis, Stocker identifies in the story of Judith a locus of reversals. Judith is chaste and virtuous, but being Holofernes' object of desire, she turns into a threat for him. Male dominance is overturned by female weakness. The outcome of the story is determined by yet another reversal. It is Holofernes' eunuch servant, Bagoas, who invites Judith to his master's tent, where she is to be seduced.[42] "If Holofernes is metaphorically emasculated, this has been foreshadowed in the story by the fact that his avatar Bagoas is a eunuch."[43] Judith decapitates Holofernes and thus acquires—'reverses'—his power; the severed head stands as the locus of displaced phallic power.[44] In the discussion that follows, the notion of 'reversal' plays a crucial role in the examination of the biblical story, Donatello's statue, and the relation between the two.

The notion of reversal has been deployed in scholarship for the interpretation of Donatello's statue. It has been associated with issues of gender identity either in relation to the biblical story or the cultural context of the work. Elena Ciletti has associated the 'masculinity' of Donatello's statue with an inversion of gender roles present in the biblical story. She discusses Donatello's group in her essay "Patriarchal Ideology in the Renaissance Iconography of Judith," where she sets out to 'disentangle' artistic representations of Judith from Freudian theory and she proposes to situate them in their cultural context.[45] Through the examination of contemporaneous humanist writings and patristic literature, she establishes that virtue in fifteenth-century Italy possessed a gender, which was specifically masculine. Additionally, fifteenth-century humanist and theological texts conflate in their misogynistic attitude. As an example of humanistic *virtù*, Donatello's *Judith* had to be 'male' to be virtuous.

Ciletti further associates the masculinity of Donatello's *Judith* to the biblical story. She identifies in the narrative an inversion of gender roles: the female exhibits the strength and resolution of the male. The reversal is effected by God himself and it is only temporary. After killing Holofernes, Judith resumes her role as a celibate widow until the end of her life. Ciletti concludes that the inversion of gender roles in the biblical story ultimately

serves to reinforce the patriarchal norm of traditional gender categories. She finds her conclusions to be in accord with Natalie Zemon Davis, who argues that gender inversions during the Early Modern period undermine, but at the same time reinforce, gender hierarchies. Finally, Ciletti's discussion of 'masculinity' does not come to bear directly on the iconography of Donatello's statue. She rather generally comments that "we cannot fail to be struck by the grim determination of the protagonist, played out in her gestures, facial expression, and, indeed, in the entire composition."[46] Whether Ciletti's allusion to the composition refers to Judith's position on top of Holofernes remains a matter of speculation.

Departing from a feminist viewpoint, Ciletti cannot escape the awareness that she is proposing a patriarchal reading. She acknowledges the gender limitations of such a reading and, writing in 1991, she ascribes them to the "current state of our culture."[47] As if to overcome these limitations, Adrian Randolph deploys the topos of the 'woman-on-top,' the inversion of gender roles to propose a female response to Donatello's statue. Randolph proposes an interpretation where the statue's political meaning is intricately interwoven with issues of gender identity.[48] He defines the topos of the 'woman-on-top' as the "textual or visual inversion of traditional, patriarchal gender relations,"[49] with its theoretical underpinnings originating in the work by Natalie Zemon Davis and Susan Smith.[50] Unlike Ciletti, who sees role inversion as a reinforcement of traditional gender categories, Randolph deploys a more enhanced notion of the topos. He aligns his interpretation with Davis, who further contends that gender inversion bears testimony to the tensions of patriarchal rule. In certain contexts, gender inversion would provide a foil for alternative behavioral modes and serve as a form of political resistance.[51]

Randolph proceeds to differentiate the male and female responses of Quattrocento viewers. For the male viewer, Donatello's statue would have functioned within the boundaries of the patriarchal norm. It would have been primarily associated with the ideals of civic freedom. On a secondary level of meaning, related to sexuality, the statue would have been associated with the need to curb the excesses of male desire and the righteousness of chastity. In his attempt to frame a potential response by the female viewer, Randolph situates Donatello's statue in the context of Florentine prints depicting the Judith theme and dating from the 1470s to the 1480s. He argues that the inversion of gender roles in this case was not intended to

reinforce traditional gender relationships but as a mode of enhancing female power. The prints do not bear a direct relation to the biblical narrative but rather to the contemporaneous erotic discourse. Apparently they ornamented boxes which were used for courtship and they were meant to convey the message of chastity to their female recipients.[52] Randolph interprets the prints as 'responses' to Donatello's statue and he suggests that they had both 'public' and 'private' meanings. The public meaning would have been related to Judith representing Justice and the civic virtues, whereas the private meaning would have been associated with sexuality and the triumph over lust on the part of "a morally correct, hard, and empowered woman."[53] Interestingly, these prints differ iconographically from Donatello's statue. Following Ghiberti's precedent, Judith is represented holding the sword in one hand and Holofernes' head in the other. Randolph's deployment of the topos of 'woman-on-top' does not come to bear upon the iconography of Donatello's statue and specifically the position of Judith standing on top of Holofernes.

The complexity of Randolph's reading of the statue and its 'responses'—public, private, political and sexual—is, however, highly significant. It finds a parallel, in my view, in the polysemy which characterizes the exegetical studies of the biblical narrative. The biblical story itself has been read as a patriarchal construct, a protofeminist story or as a narrative with multivalent meaning. Compared to any other text associated with the Bible, the book of Judith has probably received the most varied interpretations. Judith has been seen as a heroine and a savior of Israel but also as a *femme fatale* and a phallic woman.[54] Mieke Bal has provided an analysis which accounts for such divergent interpretations. She considers the story of Judith as a characteristic example of an *ideo-story*.[55] Such narratives can accommodate contrasting ideologies and are open-ended in their meaning. Their meaning needs to be fixed each time according to current ideology(ies), otherwise "they pose a threat to ideological certainties, including cognitive ones; they put knowledge at risk."[56] The story of Judith is a "topos, of which any narrative or depiction is a concretization" and as such it is a "locus of confusion."[57] Bal examines a number of representations of Judith by Caravaggio and Artemisia Gentileschi. She identifies in Caravaggio's *Judith* (Figure 8.6), for instance, an ambiguity/confusion of gender as well as a confusion of causality.[58] Lack of clarity is also detected in Freud's account of Judith in *Taboo of Virginity*. According to Bal this represents

probably the most confusing passage of Freud's entire oeuvre and the most confused discussion of the story of Judith in general.[59]

Bal finds her analysis to be in agreement with the interpretation of Donatello's *Judith and Holofernes* proposed by Mary Jacobus: "a narrative of representation itself—that is, as an instance of the power of representation to structure, and hence allay, the anxieties attending indeterminacy."[60] According to Jacobus, the psychoanalytic reading of Donatello's group, where Judith figures as a phallic female and Holofernes as an androgynous male, is reductive.[61] This is the case, however, with every other reading, whether political, allegorical or humanistic.[62] To substantiate her point, she turns to the visual characteristics of the statue. She contends that the relationship between the statue and the viewer is dynamic. Given that the sculpture possesses no clear frontal viewpoint,[63] the viewer's gaze is forced to move around it. The gaze fixes upon Judith's sword, which is visible from all viewpoints, and Judith's body stands as the central axis of the composition, "where uncertainty would otherwise set in."[64]

Bal draws a parallel between her reading of the biblical story of Judith as an ideo-story and Jacobus' interpretation of Donatello's statue. It is not entirely clear whether the statue is to be seen as a visual counterpart of the story, or a visual 'concretization' of it. Viewing every reading of Donatello's statue as reductive points to a 'visual ideo-story.' If the statue, however, succeeds in alleviating uncertainty, it constitutes a concretization of the Judith ideo-story. The analysis that follows aims at qualifying the above interpretation. I will contend that Donatello's Judith does not "allay the anxieties attending indeterminacy," it rather exposes indeterminacy. In this sense, the sculptural group would bear a more direct relation to the biblical story: it would share the structural essence of the ideo-story. Taking the Freudian interpretation of castration a step further, I will contend that Donatello's representation is to be read in the context of Lacanian desire.

Before turning to Lacan, I would like to elaborate on the inversion of gender roles in the biblical text. If the inversion is taken into consideration, it would provide us with an enhanced interpretation of the unique configuration of Donatello's statue. Judith standing literally on top of Holofernes would relate to the narrative itself. In psychoanalytic terms, the reversal of roles could be aligned with another Freudian notion: the 'masculinity complex.' In 1931, in "Female Sexuality," Freud elaborated on

his notion of 'penis envy.'[65] A woman acknowledges her lack of penis as an instance of castration. Contemporaneously she acknowledges the superiority of the male and thus her own inferiority. Three lines of psychosexual development open up to her. The first is the repulsion from sexuality. The comparison with boys frightens the girl, who grows dissatisfied with her clitoris and thus gives up sexuality altogether. The second line of development leads to the girl developing a 'masculinity complex,' which can also result in homosexuality. The woman develops the wish to be a man. The third option is the 'normal,' thus heteronormative, female development: the penis envy develops into the wish to have a baby and finally changes into the wish for a male possessor of a penis.

Interestingly, Judith, as portrayed in the biblical story, falls under Freud's first categories. She is a widow but she has no children. After killing Holofernes, she does not remarry, which means that she has no wish for a child or a male possessor of a penis. Furthermore, she spends the rest of her life in celibacy, meaning that she gives up her sexuality altogether. Judith seems to comply with the Freudian woman who wishes to be a man and behaves as such. She takes matters into her own hands both metaphorically and literally.[66] Right before killing Holofernes, she prays to God: "Strengthen me, O Lord God of Israel, and in this hour look on the works of my hands, that as thou hast promised, thou mayst raise up Jerusalem thy city: and that I may bring to pass that which I have purporsed, having a belief that if might be done by thee." (13:7). Her hand becomes the symbol of her power—the symbol of male power, the power of God. Her 'male' power is recognized by the elders: "For thou hast done manfully, and thy heart has been strengthened, because thou hast loved chastity, and after thy husband hast not known any other: therefore also the hand of the Lord hath strengthened thee, and therefore thou shalt be blessed for ever." (15:11)[67]

According to Freud, the 'wish to be a man' "re-emerges … in any neurosis that may arise if they [women] meet with a mishap in playing a feminine part," which in turn is due to a very masculine disposition.[68] This idea also aligns with the details of the biblical narrative. Judith's mishap could be the death of her husband, especially since it coincides with the lack of offspring. Or could the lack of children itself betray a masculine disposition?

Donatello's representation of Judith could be seen as illustrating the heroine's 'wish to be a man.' Judith's position on top of Holofernes plays

an important part in this respect. Judith is the one 'possessing' the power; she is the one standing *erect*. Holofernes is seated; he is lifeless, powerless, subjugated. His eyes are closed and his mouth is half open (Figure 8.4). He is drawing his last breath. Judith's eyes are open and her mouth is half open (Figure 8.1), as if drawing a first breath. As the liberating sword is ready to descend, she could not be holding a more appropriate phallic symbol. The term *sword* appears again and again in the narrative as the ultimate symbol of might.

Such an interpretation, however, would constitute a partial reading both in terms of iconography and issues of gender identity. With regard to gender, it emphasizes the grounding in patriarchy of both the biblical story and Freudian theory. It constitutes the psychoanalytic equivalent of Ciletti's interpretation of Donatello's *Judith* as a virago and Randolph's account of the male 'sexual' response to the statue. With regard to iconography, it would account for the position of Judith on top of Holofernes, but not the rest of the iconographic details. It would account for the *beginning*, but not the *unfolding* of the sexual narrative. The double strike of the sword, especially if viewed together with Judith's stepping upon Holofernes' groin, points to a different direction. The 'masculinity' of Judith might be a crucial aspect of Donatello's representation, but the statue invites us to move *beyond* it.

Despite her 'masculinity,' Judith manages to seduce Holofernes through her femininity—her beauty. Claudia Rakel has proposed an interesting interpretation of the biblical story in this respect.[69] Based on Luce Irigaray's concept of 'mimesis,' Rakel suggests that seduction is a 'role' assumed by Judith. Women in a patriarchal society have no other choice but to assume and consciously perform the gender role forced upon them. In the biblical story, beauty is not an end in itself, but a means to achieve seduction. Judith actively enhances her beauty: she dresses up and she adorns herself with jewelry. More than any other biblical heroine Judith exemplifies the interconnection of beauty and seduction; she makes herself beautiful in order to seduce.

Judith's 'performance' as a beautiful seductress is a success: Holofernes is seduced and killed. Significantly, Holofernes misses the intercourse, while he succeeds in attaining the castration. This constitutes another reversal in the biblical story—a reversal which does not relate to gender roles, but to sexuality itself. Always according to Freud, women develop

'penis envy' early on in their lives but it is after their first experience of intercourse that they dream of keeping the penis. Castration would have to *follow* intercourse in the biblical story and in Donatello's statue, as it does in Hebbel's play. Unlike the story, Donatello's group depicts both the sexual intercourse, the intertwining bodies, and castration/decapitation. The group depicts the *missed* sexual intercourse: Judith is *on top* of Holofernes, but she steps on his genitals. Judith does not merely stamp out lust, as Randolph suggests, but attempts to obliterate the sexual act altogether. Castration, as it were, happens twice: symbolically through decapitation and literally through 'crushing' the phallus. Thus, a parallel can be established to the 'double strike' of the sword, one which has already taken place and one which is about to follow—while we as viewers are situated in the ambiguous moment of such a decisive interval. Decapitation is thus also illustrated as a *missed* act. Both sexual intercourse and castration/decapitation are denoted through their absence.

The idea of presence through absence is significant for the interpretation of Donatello's statue. It invites the viewer to move beyond the depiction of Judith as a Freudian phallic woman, beyond her penis envy or her masculinity complex, beyond the reversal of gender roles, whether temporary or durational. It relates to the very unattainability of human desire, not the sexual satisfaction, but the desire which stands at the core of human existence. In Lacan's elaboration of the Oedipal complex, the phallus plays a crucial role. In the preoedipal phase, the phallus refers to an imaginary object. It is defined as the "image of the penis,"[70] an image of the body part, which can be separated through actual castration. It is imaginary in that the child *assumes* that it constitutes the object of the mother's desire. In its attempt to ensure the bliss of the dyadic union with the mother, the child wants to identify with the imaginary phallus—the object of the mother's desire. The resolution of the Oedipus complex, the Lacanian castration, consists in the 'symbolic' lack of the imaginary object of desire.[71] Entering the symbolic order for Lacan signifies the rejection of the imaginary phallus (unity with the mother) and the acceptance of the phallus as a signifier of loss. It is in this moment of splitting where desire emerges.

Lacanian desire is unattainable: this is due to the essential structural condition of the emergence of desire. To elucidate this point, we may turn to Lacan's distinction between need and desire.[72] Through the necessary involvement of language (signification) in the articulation of the subject's

needs and the Other in satisfying them, these needs can never be met in their original form. The subject demands the condition of the a priori satisfaction of needs, that is the relationship to the primordial Other, the mother. In the condition where the infant gets his needs satisfied by the (m)Other, her presence becomes symbolic of love and therefore the subject's demand is ultimately a demand for love. Lacan goes on to define desire in terms of need and demand. I will quote the passage at length as the turns in Lacan's phrasing and terminology capture the inherent structure of desire, namely its unattainability:

> … demand annuls … the particularity of everything that can be granted by transmuting it into the proof of love, and the very satisfactions that it obtains for need are reduced … to the level of being no more than the crushing of the demand for love … It is necessary, then, that the particularity thus abolished should reappear *beyond* demand. It does, in fact, reappear there, but preserving the structure contained in the unconditional element of the demand for love. By a reversal that is not simply a negation of the negation, the power of pure loss emerges from the residue of an obliteration. For the unconditional element of demand, desire substitutes the 'absolute' condition: this condition unties the knot of that element in the proof of love that is resistant to the satisfaction of a need. Thus desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second, the phenomenon of their splitting (*Spaltung*).[73]

Returning to Donatello's statue, Judith's desire of the phallus, as in the masculine-phallic Judith, would have resulted in an actual decapitation. In Donatello's group, however, decapitation has yet to occur. In this regard, Lacan's notion of castration, the phallus as a signifier of lack, finds a parallel in Donatello's representation. It is exemplified in the second strike of the sword which, although imminent, it is *never actual*. Lacan's *spaltung* is thus denoted in the absence of the actual castration. Donatello's statue points toward the unattainability of every object of desire, the Lacanian structural nonfulfillment of human needs. Holofernes misses the intercourse because he is castrated, or he is castrated in order for him not to attain the object of his desire. The missed acts, as 'witnessed' by the viewer, find a parallel in the Lacanian absence of satisfaction of desire.

In terms of its iconographic details, the statue does not generically stand for the biblical story. As clearly denoted by the double strike (and the uniqueness of this representation), the statue relates to the second moment of decapitation. The statue's departure from the narrative—the position of Judith on top of Holofernes, which is inextricably related to her stepping upon Holofernes' groin and the impossibility of the second strike (decapitation)—constitutes a rupture with the text. Significantly, this

rupture points to the Lacanian 'splitting.' If the statue were to 'stand' for the story, it would 'stand' for human desire. The biblical text concerns the attaining or not of (sexual) satisfaction: Holofernes misses the intercourse but he attains the castration. Judith does cut off his head; she puts it in a bag and she takes it back to her people. Lacanian theory reminds us that even when satisfaction is obtained, there is always a leftover, which can never be fulfilled. It is this profound human anxiety that is exposed in Donatello's statue. The statue does not "allay the anxieties attending indeterminacy," as Mary Jacobus proposes, neither does it merely expose indeterminacy; it rather confronts the viewer with unattainability. This might point to the reason why the gash on Holofernes' neck has been 'hidden' from scholarship, or the reason why scholars have even relegated it to a casting flaw. To draw a parallel with Lacan's exposition on need/desire, the gash would figure as a 'residue of obliteration'—the particularity of satisfaction which is annulled by demand and it is destined to reappear beyond demand as desire. It is this reversal, inherent in desire but absent in the text, which is ultimately exposed in Donatello's sculptural group of *Judith and Holofernes*.

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Notes

1 For a list of the most relevant scholarly literature, see Randolph (2002, 331, note 2).
2 Kauffmann (1934, 165–76).
3 Wind (1937).
4 Erffa (1968).
5 Looper (1992).
6 For a discussion of the statue's inscriptions and previous bibliography, see Caglioti (2000, vol. 1, 1–21 and vol. 2, Appendix I, 397–400).

7 For the translation of the inscriptions, I am following Randolph (2002, 252).
8 Janson (1963, 203).
9 McHam (2001).
10 Schneider (1976a, 46).
11 Crum (2001).
12 Janson (1963, 200), followed by Pope-Hennessy (1993, 280).
13 For studies on the iconography of Judith from the Middle Ages onwards, see Ciletti, (1991, 38, note 4) and Stone (1992). See also discussion and relevant literature by Garrard (1989, especially Chapter 5).
14 See for instance (Ciletti 1991, 54–57).
15 This type appears in Domenico Ghirlandaio's *Judith with her Maidservant* (1489), (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Germany). A similar representation where Judith is shown placing Holofernes' head in a bag held by her maidservant is found in *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (*c.* 1495/1500) by Andrea Mantegna or Follower (National Gallery of Art, Widener Collection, Washington DC, US). A very similar compositional type, with the difference of Judith turning her back to the viewer, appears in Mantegna's drawing of *Judith* (1491), (Uffizi, Florence, Italy).
16 This is a rare representation of this particular moment of the story. Godwin (1945, 74–5), traces this particular scene to the Vienna Bible (Ms. 1191, Austrian National Library, Vienna, Austria), an Italian bible of the third quarter of the fourteenth century. Michelangelo's *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (1509) on the Sistine Ceiling appears to combine the two episodes of the story, as portrayed in the two versions by Botticelli. Holofernes' decapitated body lies in his bed, occupying the right part of the scene. On the center left, Judith and her maid are depicted leaving the scene of decapitation. The maid is carrying on her head a plate with Holofernes' head. See also Tatiana String's chapter in this volume, in particular Figure 7.7.
17 The Book of Judith is part of the Apocrypha of the Bible and it probably dates from the second century BCE. The oldest extant version is the Greek Septuagint, while the Jewish texts related to the story of Judith are found in medieval manuscripts. An analysis of the texts related to the story of Judith is found in Dubarle (1966). A very useful critical edition of the Greek Septuagint is Zeitlin (1972), especially for the history of Christian and Jewish interpretations. Specifically for Judith in the Christian tradition, see a more recent discussion in Ciletti and Lähnemann (2010). I will be quoting from the Vulgate in a Douay version translation, Kohlenberger III (1997). For the Greek Septuagint version of the text, I will be using Moore (1985).
18 For this discussion see Janson (1963, 204). More recently, Randolph (2002, 251; 332, note 21) has pointed out that even if the gash were a casting flow, Donatello chose not to restore it. It was thus meant to be read as Judith's first blow.
19 The actual scene of Holofernes' decapitation appears in medieval manuscripts. In Italian bibles, we usually find the depiction of the moment before the decapitation. Holofernes is lying in his bed. Judith stands next to him and raises the sword to kill him. In some instances, Holofernes' head has already been severed. In this case, the head is detached from the body but is depicted right next to it. Judith holds the raised sword in one hand and Holofernes' head with the other. For a discussion of representations of Judith in the Middle Ages, see Godwin (1945) and Godwin (1949). For illustrations of Italian bibles in particular, see Godwin (1945, 63–76). Herzner (1980, 144) suggests that Donatello would have known Guariento's fourteenth-century fresco *Judith killing Holofernes* (Accademia Galileiana di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, Padua, Italy). In this painting, Holofernes is shown lying in his bed. His right hand is hanging down and touches the floor. Judith is standing next to the bed and is stepping upon his hand with her left foot. She holds the sword with her right hand and Holofernes' severed head—still only slightly attached to the body—with her left hand. Herzner refrains, however, from identifying

in Guariento's fresco a 'model' for Donatello's painting, because of the difference in medium in the two works. For the position of Judith on top of Holofernes, Herzner (1980, 142–8) proposes that Donatello turns to medieval psychomachia.

20 Randolph (2002, 251–6). As mentioned in note above, Herzner has proposed that Donatello turned to medieval representations of allegorical psychomachia, where the triumphant figure is shown standing on top of the conquered enemy. The connection of the allegorical meaning of Donatello's statue to psychomachia was first made by Kauffmann (1934, 165–76). For his interpretation, Randolph draws and expands upon the allegorical reading of *Judith and Holofernes* as *Sanctimonia* versus *Luxuria* proposed by Wind (1937) and he aligns it with the statue's triumphal meaning related to Medicean politics.

21 Randolph (2002, 251).

22 The impossibility of the act has been pointed out by Herzner (1980, 139–80).

23 My emphasis.

24 Randolph (2002, 251).

25 Randolph (2002, 256).

26 Randolph (2002, 256).

27 Randolph (2002, 256).

28 For the sources related to *David*, see Janson (1963, 77–9) and for *Judith and Holofernes* Janson (1963, 198–200).

29 Kauffmann (1934, 165–76) suggests that the biblical characters of David and Judith were linked in the Middle Ages. He is followed in this by Janson (1963, 83; 203) and subsequent scholars. A most recent argument regarding their closely interrelated meaning is found in McHam (2001).

30 The feather is associated with Donatello's probable homosexuality in Schneider (1973, 213–16) and its meaning is further elaborated in relation to Freudian theory in Adams (1996, 186–90). More recently, Randolph (2002, 139–92), has situated Donatello's *David* in the context of sodomy in fifteenth-century Florence, providing a reading which accounts for the two aspects of meaning of the statue, generally hard to reconcile: the political and the homoerotic.

31 Pope-Hennessy (1993, 150).

32 Freud (1953–74), "Medusa's head," vol. 8, 273.

33 Freud (1953–74), "Three Essays on Sexuality," vol. 7, 195.

34 Freud (1953–74), "On the Sexual Theories of Children," vol. 9, 209–26.

35 Freud (1953–74), "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes," vol. 19, 252.

36 Freud (1953–74), "The Taboo of Virginity," vol. 11, 193–208.

37 Jacobus (1986, 115–16), has quite rightly pointed out that Freud introduces the notion of 'penis envy' because he cannot successfully account for the emergence of female hostility after the first instance of intercourse and that he uses Hebbel's Judith to substantiate his discussion.

38 Schneider (1976b).

39 A number of articles in the journal *American Imago* have pursued this topic. Kleinschmidt (1976) agrees with Schneider's analysis and proceeds to extend the discussion to Gentileschi's *Murder of Holofernes*. Pointon (1981) departs from the idea of decapitation = castration and argues that Gentileschi's depiction of Judith relates to the trauma of childbirth. Slap (1985) furthers this discussion by examining Gentileschi's biography to support Pointon's connection to childbirth.

40 Stocker (1990, 97–8).

41 Stocker (1998, 9). Throughout the book, but especially Chapter 2, 3–23, Stocker elaborates and enhances the psychoanalytic reading of the biblical story provided in Stocker (1990).

42 Stocker (1990, 96).

43 Stocker (1998, 7).

44 Stocker (1990, 92).
45 Ciletti (1991).
46 Ciletti (1991, 60).
47 Ciletti (1991, 70).
48 Randolph (2002, 242–85).
49 Randolph (2002, 248).
50 Davis (1978) and Smith (1995).
51 Davis (1978).
52 For his discussion, Randolph expands upon the interpretation of imagery on bridal chests and childbirth trays by Jacobsen-Schutte (1980). Jacobsen-Schutte interprets the reversal of roles in such imagery as singular moments of female empowerment when women became wives or mothers.
53 Randolph (2002, 271).
54 For a review of the extensive biblical scholarship on Judith, see Craven (2003). In her review of the Judith studies spanning one hundred years, Craven distinguishes three phases. During the first period, 1913–49, questions focus on historical and geographical anachronisms and issues of literary genre and translation. The second phase, 1950–85, is characterized by interest in translations and critical commentary and sees the beginning of feminist studies. The third phase, 1986–2001, is characterized by the expansion of critical studies, including feminism, semiotics and psychoanalysis. In particular, Craven points to the work by three female scholars: Margarita Stocker, Mieke Bal and Athalya Brenner.
55 For the meaning of *ideo-story* as proposed by Bal, see Bal (1989, 11–24).
56 Bal (1994, 14).
57 Bal (1994, 15). She also points to the fact that the biblical story possesses no certainties in terms of authorship or whether it is an F or M text.
58 Bal (1994, 8–13).
59 Bal (1994, 14). For an analysis of Freud's essay by the same author, see Bal (1988, 52–9).
60 Jacobus (1986, 128).
61 Jacobus (1986) recounts a psychoanalytic reading of Donatello's *Judith and Holofernes*, ascribing it to Schneider (1976b), who apparently views the bronze *David* and *Judith* as companion pieces. Donatello's bronze *David* is meant to represent a fetishistic erection. The feminized Holofernes is to be seen as a parallel to the androgynous David, while the phallic Judith is meant to relate to the artist's alleged homosexuality. Schneider, however, does not offer an analysis of Donatello's *Judith*; she simply mentions that decapitation in the biblical stories of St. John the Baptist, Judith and Delilah is in all cases connected with erotic content.
62 The entire argument is found in Jacobus (1986, 128–30).
63 For this interpretation, Jacobus relies on Greenhalgh (1982, 192).
64 Jacobus (1986, 130).
65 Freud (1953–74), "Female Sexuality," vol. 21, 225–43.
66 The emphasis on Judith's ability to take matters into her own hands is prominent in the Greek Septuagint but this exact phrasing is omitted in the Vulgate. See for instance the following passages in the Greek text: "I am going to do something which will go down among the children of our people for endless generations… . the Lord will deliver Israel, by my hand." (8:32–33); "… put into my hand—a widow's—the strength I need… . Break their [Assyrian] pride by the hand of a female!" (9:9–10). Moore (1985).
67 The Greek Septuagint text emphasizes Judith's agency as opposed to the chastity emphasized in the Vulgate: "You are the glory of Jerusalem! You are the great pride of Israel! You are the great boast of our nation. For by your own hand you have accomplished this. You have done well by Israel; God is well pleased with it. May the Omnipotent Lord bless you in all days to

come." (16:9–10). Moore (1985). Ciletti (1991) points out the emphasis on chastity in the Vulgate as opposed to the Greek Septuagint text.

68 Freud (1953–74), "The Sexual Life of Human Beings," vol. 16, 318.

69 Rakel (2012). As Rakel maintains, her intent is to allow for the tension between a patriarchal and a feminist reading rather than attempting a reconciliation of the two. While still sustaining a patriarchal reading, she allows for the female empowerment of the story's main protagonist. Rakel concludes, however, that this empowerment appears to be only temporary.

70 Lacan (1977, 319).

71 Lacan (1991a, 219).

72 For the following discussion, see especially "The Signification of the Phallus," in Lacan (1977, 281–91).

73 Lacan (1977, 286–7).

Part III

Beyond the ‘Pleasure Principle’ or the Polysemy of Desire

9 Violence and Desire

Fetishist Impulses and Violence against the Female Body in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*

Liliana Leopardi

Lequale errabonde & iſcie, itentiſſime alla fuga per deuii & auii lochi, & per denſi ſpini ire coacte, & p illaceráte & mortale fragritio & per lardo re delinfocato carro molte fiate exorbitáte ſcalpitando per gli arbuſculi, da capo a piedi laniate, & di ſangue gli mẽbri diſcuſſi pioueuano, & le lace rate carne. Et il uermiglio & fumido ſangue, copioſaméte ſpargierſi per le acculeate ſente, & per la terra io uidi. Et diſordinataméte per le folte & pun tute uepre da furioſa rabie concite, mo qui, mo li, malaméte lo ardente & pondoſo carro traheuano, Che ancora crudelmente incendeua le molle & delicate carnule. Lequale nõ ſolaméte erão cocte, ma como uno puſto corio crepauano. Et ſi non Vahu, & cridi miſerabilmente affligentiſe ad alti clamori & pianti, & miſerabili eiulati exclamauano, uerſe in magiore re furia di Oreſte. Dique ilſcabroſo & arboriſſimo locho, tuto degli pieto ſi accenti riſonaua, & hogi mai le mãdibule reſtringẽtiſe, & raucitata la ſtã ca & cõſumpta uoce, nõ ualeuano piu le doloroſe exanime durare. Dapo ſcia paucula hora, molti crudeliſſimi aĩali le iũſſerõ. Et il carnifice & ĩmite fãciullo, doppo lũgo & cruẽto ſtracio & imãitate dlle ſuẽturate & miſchíe aduleſcẽtule. Quale cruẽto & exercitato í ſimili carnificii, dellardẽte uehi culo di ſubito diſceſe, Cũ una ſoliferrea & tagliẽte R õphea, ſolute dal mo leſto iugo, & graue traheĩ, p medio dl ſuo pulſãte core. Ello ſpogliato di q̃ lũche uenia & miſeratiõe, cũ rigida & icõtamiata ſeueritate, ſubito trãfiſſe.

B iii

Figure 9.1 Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, Venetiis: in aedibus Aldi Manutii, 1499. (Vienna, Austrian National Library, Ink. 4.E.9,

fol. 201r), *Polia witnesses two young women killed and dismembered by a winged figure (Eros)*.

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The fourth image of Book II of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*[1] (Figure 9.1) shows Polia hidden in the woods, witnessing the dismemberment of the bodies of two women at the hands of a winged figure. The latter is never identified by the text as Cupid, though he is illustrated as such. The gruesome qualities of the scene are amplified by the text:

> … after the girls had rendered up their final cries, the boy, devoid of all humanity, struck them and cut them in two. Then slicing open their womanly breast, he tore out their still beating hearts, and threw them to the birds of prey. He gave their steaming innards to the ill omened eagles and the rest of their pallid bodies he quartered and threw to the raving beasts.[2]

The image is preceded by another similarly disturbing image (Figure 9.2) showing Polia hidden in the woods looking at two grimacing young women tied to a chariot driven by a winged figure who whips them, causing them evident distress—the same two women whose bodies will be dismembered by Cupid. The two images are placed adjacent to each other in such a manner that one appears on the left on page 400 and the other appears on the right on page 401. Both images and accompanying text point to one of the few unstudied elements of this eponymous incunabulum: the truculent violence that runs throughout Book II.[3]

Scholarly analyses of Book I have long recognized the interplay between text and image and the author's emphasis on Poliphilo's longing and frustrated desire, yet these have never before been examined in connection to the violent narrative (exemplified both in text and image) of Book II.[4] However, given the role violence plays in Book II, it behooves us to ask which elements connect the desire of Book I to the violence of Book II. A psychoanalytic approach to the interplay of desire and violence suggests that fetishist impulses account not only for the narrative's content, but also for the structure of the whole work. As a central component of the humanist narrative, violence against the female body served to enforce a male paradigm of social and political order, but in this work in particular, it appears to be directly engendered by a fetishist desire. The fetishist impulses are revealed by a fascination with knots, ties and restrains of all sorts (as described in Book I), while functioning as a defensive mechanism against the overpowering desire to destroy the love object (as described in

Book II). Unlike those scholars who see the two tomes of this work as wholly different in nature, an analysis of the particular type of fetishism deployed in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* suggests that Book I functions as the natural cover, or *involucrum tegumentum*, of Book II.[5]

It may also be further argued that the interaction between images and text are designed to intensify the fetishist position, for images and text are constructed around a fluid and alternating relationship of anticipation, frustrated desire, pleasure and violence: i.e. at times the text anticipates the subject illustrated, amplifying the emotional content of the image, other times the opposite occurs. The placement of the third and fourth images in Book II perfectly exemplifies the manner in which many of the images in the *Hypnerotomachia* function: the images are startling, cruel and anticipate the shock the reader will feel while reading the text. The preceding pages contain no forewarning; thus, upon turning from page 399 to page 400 the reader is confronted with the shockingly violent images (Figures 9.1 and 9.2) that entice him to read on and discover a text that further amplifies that sense of horror first felt on beholding the illustrations.

momento fui per laire deportata & demiſſa. Et quiui dicio cum il baten-
te core, oltra il credere iſpauentata di tanto repẽtino caſo & tanto iſperato,
Incominciai di ſentire quello che ancora io uoleua, guai guai fortiſſima-
mente exclamare, cum feminei ullulati, & uoce flebile, & pauuroſi lamen
ti, quãto piu ualeuano. Quale ſentite & uide il Nobile rauennate.

Oue ſenza inducia uidi diſordinariamente uenire due doléte & ſiagu-
rate fanciulle, indi & quindi, & ſpeſſo ceſpitante, ſũma puocatione di pie-
tate, ad uno ignitato uehiculo angariate, & cum cathene candente di for-
te Calybe al iugo illaqueate. Le quale duramente ſtringiente le tenere &
biãchiſſime & plumee carne peruſtulauano. Et decapillate nude, cum le
brace al dorſo reuincte, miſerabilmente piangeuano, le mandibule ſtridé
te, & ſopra le infocate cathene le liquante lachryme friſſauano. Inceſſante
mente ſtimolate da uno iſiammabondo & ſenza iſtima furibondo, & im-
placabile fanciullo. Il quale alligero di ſopra lardente ueha ſedeua, Cum
laſpecto ſuo formidabile, Piu indignato & horribile non fue la terribile
Gorgonea teſta ad Phineo, & alli cõpagni, Cum beluina rabie & furore,
Et cum uno neruico & icendioſo flagello, feramente percoteua, ſenza pie
tate ſtimulante le inuinculate puelle. Et cum magiore uindicta di Zeto
& Amphyone, contra Dirce nouerca.

Figure 9.2 Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, Venetiis: in aedibus Aldi Manutii, 1499 (Vienna, Austrian National Library, Ink. 4.E.9, fol. 200v), *Polia witnesses two young women tortured by a winged figure (Eros)*.

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The *Hypnerotomachia*: A Summary

First translated into English in 1592 as the *Strife of Love in a Dreame of Poliphilo*,[6] the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* is arguably one of the most famous incunabula ever printed in Venice. Published by Aldus Manutius in 1499, written in a recondite and at times bizarre Latinate Italian, and dedicated to Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino (1470–1508), the work is comprised of two volumes illustrated with a total of 172 woodcuts.[7] The acrostic, formed by the first letter of each chapter of the original edition, spells out the identity of the text's supposed author "Poliam Frater Franciscus Columna Peramavit" (Brother Francesco Colonna Loved Polia very much). Francesco Colonna has been identified as a Venetian Dominican friar thought to have written the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* sometime prior to 1499.[8] Scholars unsatisfied with the cryptic statement of authorship have searched for the author among other important humanists of the time, including Leon Battista Alberti and Aldus Manutius himself.[9] Yet, Marco Ariani and Mino Gabrieli's philological analysis convincingly suggests that the author cannot but have been Venetian, thus confirming the alleged authorship of Francesco Colonna.[10]

Book I, long the object of close scholarly scrutiny, is an eroticized onyric humanist encyclopedia narrated as a dream within a dream. The text is completed by delicately rendered illustrations and elegantly wrapped in *technopaegnia*.[11] The hero/narrator of Book I is Poliphilo (whose name might mean either 'lover of many things' or 'lover of Polia'), who is engaged in a frantic search for his beloved Polia. Whilst dreaming, Poliphilo enters a dark and scary wood, the *locus terribilis*, from which he flees in terror.[12] Within this first dream, he falls asleep and dreams of having arrived in a *locus amoenus*, the realm of Free Will. Thus, he starts a long journey during which he encounters fantastical structures—the pyramid—countless antique sculptural and architectonic ruins, antique textual fragments and fountains, all described in the most painstaking detail. The objects' lavish descriptions are often highly sensual or erotic; such is the case, for example of the fountain of a nude reclining nymph whose breasts spew out hot and cold water, or the impish sculpture of a boy who 'pees' on the unsuspecting Poliphilo at his bath.[13] He is enjoying the bath in the company of five nymphs, personifications of the five senses, whose only aim is that of titillating him, to his great delight and distress. In his journey through this eroticized oneiric landscape Poliphilo encounters a series of fantastical figures, from a fearsome dragon to Eleuterilyda, the queen of

Free Will and her seductive nymphs, five of which, as just mentioned, embody the five senses, the other five being identified as Impulse, Fantasy, Memory, Reason and Will. Following the counsel of Will, our protagonist finds himself in the realm of Love. There he encounters a nymph with whom he immediately falls in love, for she might indeed be Polia, though her identity will only be clearly ascertained by our hero at the temple of Venus Physizoa. In the land of Love, he witnesses a series of triumphal processions that carry onwards the erotic theme of the book: four triumphs celebrate the loves of Jupiter, a fifth the union of Vertumnus and Pomona, and a sixth celebrates the priapic rites at a large phallic altar dedicated to the god. Upon the couple's arrival at the temple of Venus, Polia's identity is confirmed to Poliphilo's immense and never-ending delight. Thus, reunited with his beloved Polia, the lovers wait for Cupid's arrival. As they wait for the god, Poliphilo takes a detour through the antique town of Polyandrion, which is filled with temples and tombs. Each tomb is decorated with epitaphs narrating the infelicitous love of a great number of couples, who alas were united only in death.[14] At the depiction of the rape of Proserpina, Poliphilo suddenly fears for Polia, whom he has left alone; he thus rejoins her and the couple is finally taken to the island of Cythera by Cupid as boatswain; there, after a most detailed description of the island's luscious gardens, Poliphilo and Polia become integral participants of a triumphal procession meant to symbolize the completion of their love. The procession leads them to the heptagonal fountain of the goddess of Venus. At their union, the erotic elements of the story become all the more explicit as Venus welcomes Mars into her arms and Polia is moved to begin telling her story at the tomb of Adonis. Thus ends Book I.

Book II, meant to be telling Polia's own side of the story, actually interweaves Polia's voice with that of the ever-present Poliphilo. Gone are the ekphrases that characterized Book I, so that Book II appears to be a straightforward narrative of Polia's story. Its sources, more easily identifiable than those of Book I, are in part to be found in Boccaccio's *Decameron* and the story of *Nastagio degli Onesti*.

Book II begins with Polia narrating the manner in which Poliphilo suddenly and violently fell in love with her upon seeing her once at a temple, and how she initially rejected his love. She had vowed her chastity to Diana in *ex voto*, for the goddess had saved her life during a terrible plague. Unmoved by Poliphilo's numerous and ceaseless pronunciations of

love, Polia leaves him in the grips of a deathlike swoon in the temple where he had approached her. As soon as she runs away from the temple, though, she is whisked away by a strange wind and made to witness the gruesome punishment, death and dismemberment meted out to two women whose sin was Polia's own: that of being a cold, rejecting woman. Once safe back in her own house, and unable to sleep alone, she asks for her old nursemaid to spend the night with her. The night brings her a renewal of the nightmarish vision she had beheld earlier in the day. Woken up by her nurse, in whom she confides, she is told that such visions are messages from the gods, who are asking her to abandon her vows to Diana, and to embrace instead those of Venus, on pain of a terrible death, should she disobey. Thus Polia goes back to the temple where she had left Poliphilo's body, and in a reversal of the sleeping beauty fable, embracing him and lavishing love upon him, she brings his soul back to life, so that they may finally be reunited and their union be blessed by Venus. Yet, as Poliphilo takes Polia into his arms, she disappears. Poliphilo wakes up from the dream realizing that his beloved had been dead all along.[15]

The 172 woodcuts that illustrate the text were certainly integral to the manuscript the publisher was given.[16] Lamberto Donati's careful study has revealed that many images are executed in such a manner as to suggest errors of interpretation of the original drawings on the part of the woodcuts' designers.[17] However, that the images were integral to the text, and thus originally designed by the author, confirms that their deployment throughout the text was carefully orchestrated by the author to emphasize a specific type of interaction between text and images.

Giovanni Pozzi classified all the images found in the *Hypnerotomachia* as either narrative or descriptive: all images containing figures were classified as narrative aids meant to clarify the otherwise complicated verbal description.[18] Yet, as Rosemary Trippe has argued, such images are more complex than mere narrative aids, since through their descriptive qualities they "represent to, communicate to and evoke in the viewer the emotional states rather than solely illustrate actions."[19] Indeed, the images' complex relationship to the text may not be explained away by assigning to them one singular function. Moving beyond Trippe's conception, as mentioned above, I would further suggest that the exact placement of the image in relationship to the text must be carefully considered to understand whether images are enhancing what has already been said in words, or

whether they anticipate through visual stimulation what is then carefully described in the text later. The anticipation or postcipation of desire plays a vital role in the fetishist position.

Frustrated Desire, the Humanist Tradition and Commonly Accepted Fetishist Elements

One of the most blatant examples of the manner in which the interaction between text and image is directly aimed at enhancing/frustrating desire may be found near the end of Book I, when Poliphilo is reunited with Polia at the Fountain of Venus.[20] The access to the fountain is barred by a curtain that bears the inscription YMHN (Hymen), which Poliphilo naturally promptly destroys, while causing Polia significant distress.[21] The architectonic arrangement of the fountain is conceived as a vaginal space to be penetrated and possessed by the hero. Interestingly the fountain is not illustrated or represented as Poliphilo would have seen it, neither as the text describes it, but rather the woodcut shows only a geometrical outline of the structure as seen from above: a simple line drawing of an octagonal shape indicates the luxurious fountain described by the text (Figure 9.3).

This schematized aerial view renders the fountain a virginal enclosed object to be deflowered by words. As such, the fountain is not only a fetish, standing for the female body; rather, the whole episode is a perfect example of an image that frustrates desires, while the text amplifies it, renders it clear and satisfies it through action. Unlike a number of other fountains in the text, this one is not rendered in an illustrative manner. A mere octagonal line drawing purposely accompanies a description charged with eroticism and desire, and in which the most delicate detail and material are seen as important to the reader's enjoyment.

A similar motif is found in the image that appears on page 149 of Book I; this image has been noted by many scholars because it shows Poliphilo's first encounter with his beloved Polia, and also illustrates aspects of Poliphilo's erotic desire (Figure 9.4).

The image shows Poliphilo and Polia holding hands as they walk out of a trellis; Polia holds a lit torch in her left hand. The text preceding the image, informs us that as Poliphilo placed his hand in hers: "As I placed it in hers, I felt grasped between warm snow and solid milk… . I judged my plebeian garb and my incongruous and common dress unfit for her… ."[22] The image

shows him grasping the right side of his tunic in a phallic shape held at the correct anatomical height, as the significance of the gesture is delved into a few lines later: "I now felt myself touched by a pleasant warmth, growing little by little, and beginning to heat and melt my frigid fear and adjusting the heat to the proper degree for genuine love… ."[23]

In this case, the image anticipates the frustrated base desire that is articulated in the text by a series of elaborate antithetical metaphors, a device commonly found in Petrarchan poetry.[24] Such antithesis as 'calda neve' are deployed to describe the conflicting emotions of a lover ashamed of his own ignoble desires for the creature he idolizes and describes as angelic.[25] The insistence on conflicting emotions, on frustration and displacement is a frequent occurrence in the Italian vernacular lyric tradition as embodied by Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch: the lover can neither attain physical consummation, nor forget his beloved.[26] Colonna manipulates his readers' emotions by using images that create an almost onyric atmosphere in which the viewer sees and yet not fully comprehends what is shown.[27] The image articulates with direct immediacy the affect that the textual narrative intensifies. The images, just like the text, continuously remind the reader of Polia's unattainability.

In Book I, in fact, the unattainable beloved is ever present, for it may be found even in the abundant architectonic structures Poliphilo encounters and minutely and lavishly describes. As observed by a number of scholars, such architectonic structures, monuments and ruins function as a metaphor for the female body in general, and for the body of the beloved Polia in particular: the whole of Book I is pervaded by a *libido edificandi*; a not-so-thin disguise for a *libido amandi*.

Il quale nel medioſtimo di queſto inhumano ædificamento diuinam̃
te conſtructo & expreſſo per queſto modo. Della nigerrima petra, che ſo-
la integram̃te era tutto il ſilicato, oueramente il pauimentato dilarea di eſ
ſa propria nel mediano in uno murulo ſublato pedale, cum egregia poli
tura reducta cum omni ornato opportuno di forma extrinſeca heptago
no, & della interſtitia rotunda. Cum lambiente cimaſula & ſocco & aru-
lette, & undiculatione fabrefacte & ordinariamente ſuppoſite alle baſe, ſo
pra il mediano puncto degli anguli, dil quale per ciaſcuno era ſuper aſtru
cta una enthesiata, ouero uétriculata colũna in numero ſepte, cum ſum-
ma exquiſitura turbinate. Dille quale due correſpõdeuano æquale ex ad-
uerſo dell ingreſſo. In conſpecto di queſto oue ſtauamo, pni geniculati.

Vna dille quale tornatile colũne, alla dextera parte cyanaua p̃fulgente
di finiſſimo ſapphyro, & dalla ſiniſtra uernaua uiréte ſmaragdo di p̃ſtan-
tiſſimo colore piu lucentiſſimo che gli affixi per gli ochii al Leone al tu-
mulo di Hermia regulo. Ne tale fu donato da Ptolemæo ad Lucullo. Ne
di tanta p̃tioſitate fue il p̃ſentato da Re di Babylonia al Re Aegyptico, ne
di tanto æſtimamento furono quegli dil obeliſco nel Tempio di Ioue.
Ne di tanta miraueglia fue la ſtatua nel templo di Hercule in Tyro, quale
queſto admirando ſe p̃ſtaua. Proximo ad queſta ſequiua una columna di
petra turchinia di uenuſto Ceruleo coloratiſſima, cum la uirtute gratio-
ſamente donata. Et quantũque cæca, Niente di meno illuſtriſſima & ſpe-
cularim̃te p̃fulgeua. Contigua al
la ſapphyrica columna aſſideua
una pretioſa di petra cæca etiam
di iucundiſſimo colore, quale il
Meliloto, & di luſtro quale lo ĩ-
terlucido floreo dil uatrachio.
Adhæriua a q̃ſta una di Iaſpide
di colore hyalino, & laltra di to-
patio fulgurante colore aureo. La
ſeptima ſola & ſingularmente era
hexagonia di lympidiſſimo beril
lo indico di oleaceo nitore incõ
trario gli obiecti reddendo. Et q̃-
ſta per medio dille due prime cor
reſpondeua, per che omni figu-
ra diſpare angulare, Vno angulo obuia nel mediano dellintercalato
di dui. Dũque il circulo obducto del ſuo diametro ſemiſſe, iui uno trian
gulo æqlatero cõſtituito, & poſcia dal cẽtro una liea, nel medio dilla linea

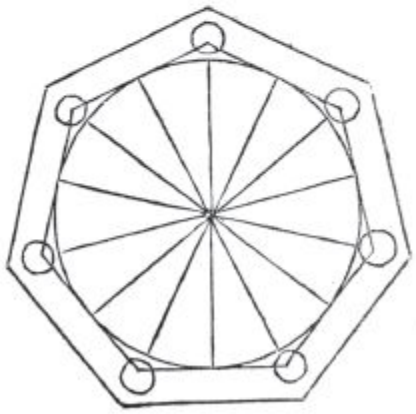

Figure 9.3 Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, Venetiis: in aedibus Aldi Manutii, 1499 (Vienna, Austrian National Library, Ink. 4.E.9, fol. 180r), *The fountain of Venus*.

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Leonard Barkan had already noted that the Renaissance response to antiquity was characterized by the fetish of the metonym.[28] In such

conception, the Renaissance recuperation of antiquity was a recuperation of fragments of disembodied pieces emerging from the soil, accompanied by a paraxosistic effort to imagine them complete and whole; a fragment stood not just for a work now lost, but for a whole culture and experience. The fragment could engender a desire and phantasy for a lost whole. Book I, in fact, begins with an image of Poliphilo in a landscape littered with ruins (image four of Book I, Figure 9.5) and continues on with descriptions of imagined fantastical whole buildings. A number of other woodcuts illustrate architectural components described or imagined as belonging to larger complexes (see for example pages 241, 295, 302, 311, 313, 315, 317 and 318). Thus, even in the book these fragments have the function of inciting the Renaissance viewer's desire to complete the ruins of the past, and, by exponential logic, to imagine what they would have been like whole. The architectonic images appear to function as visual stimuli for the fetishist desire. A desire that is perpetually frustrated because ruins will always remain ruins, just as the beloved Polia will always remain unattainable. There are very few instances in which the leitmotif of the frustrated desire seems to leave space for fulfillment, and the fountain of Venus is perhaps the clearest metaphor in merit.

Et poſtala nella ſua, ſtrengerla ſentiua tra calda neue, & in fra coagulo lacteo. Et parue ad me ímo cuſi era de attingere & attrectare pur altro che coſa di cõditione humana. La onde poſcia che cuſi facto hebbi, ireſtai tuto agitato & concuſſo, & ſuſpicoſo, non ítẽdando le coſe inuiſitate ad gli mortali. Ne ancora che dindi ne doueſſe ſequire, cum plebeo habito pan noſo, & cũ iſciochi & uulgari coſtumi, difforme allei iſtimantime inepto & diſſimile di tale cõſortio, & illicito eſſere mortali & terrogenio tale delitie fruire. Per laq̃le cagiõe arroſſciata la facia, tutto diuerecũda admiratiõe reimpleto, al quãto della mia imitate cõdolẽdomi, ſectario ſuo me expoſi.

Vltimaméte pur nõ cum integro & tutto riuocato animo icominciai de riducere gli pauidi & pturbati ſpiriti, Suadẽdomi meritaméte beatiſſimo exito eſſere appreſſo tale belliſſimo & diuo obiecto, & in cuſi facto loco. Laſpecto præſtabile della quale ualida uirtute harebbe hauuto di trahere & di tranſmigrare le perdute alme fora delle æterne flamme, & de riduregli corpi icõpacti negli monuméti al ſuo cõiuncto, Et bacho hareb be neglecto la iclyta temulẽtia di Gaurano, Fauſiano, & Falerno, & Puci-

Figure 9.4 Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, Venetiis: in aedibus Aldi Manutii, 1499 (Vienna, Austrian National Library, Ink. 4.E.9, fol. 157r), *Poliphilo meets Polia for the first time but does not yet recognize her*.

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arbòſcelli,& di floride Geniſte,& di multiplice herbe uerdiſſime, quiui uidi il Cythiſo,La Carice,la commune Cerinthe. La muſcariata Panachia el fiorito ranunculo,& ceruicello,o uero Elaphio,& la ſeratula,& di uarie aſſai nobile,& de molti altri proficui ſimplici,& ignote herbe& fiori per gli prati diſpenſate. Tutta queſta læta regione de uiridura copioſamente adornata ſe offeriua. Poſcia poco piu ultra del mediano ſuo,io ritrouai uno ſabuleto,o uero glareoſa plagia, ma in alcuno loco diſperſamente,cum alcuni ceſpugli de herbatura. Quiui al gliochii mei uno iocundiſſimo Palmeto ſe appræſento,cum le foglie di cultrato mucrone ad tanta utilitate ad gli ægyptii,del ſuo dolciſſimo fructo fœcũde& abundante. Tra lequale racemoſe palme,& picole alcune, & molte mediocre, & laltre drite erano & excelſe, Electo Signo de uictoria per el reſiſtere ſuo ad lurgente pondo. Ancora & in queſto loco non trouai incola, ne altro animale alcuno. Ma peregrinando ſolitario tra le non denſate, ma interuallate palme ſpectatiſſime,cogitando delle Rachelaide, Phaſelide,& Libyade,non eſſere forſa a queſte comparabile. Ecco che uno affermato & carniuoro lupo alla parte dextra,cum la bucca piena mi apparue.

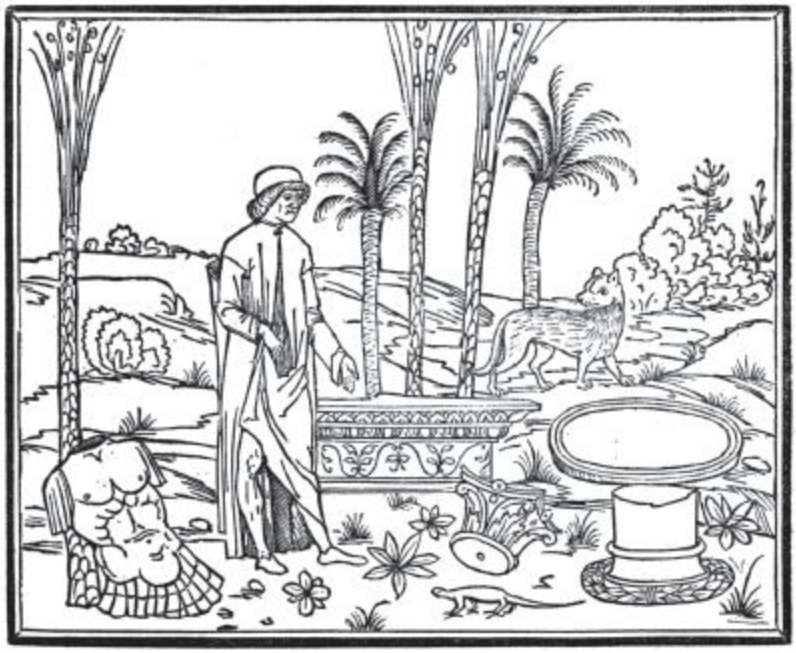

Figure 9.5 Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, Venetiis: in aedibus Aldi Manutii, 1499 (Vienna, Austrian National Library, Ink. 4.E.9, fol. 11r), *Poliphilo encounters a landscape filled with ancient ruins*.

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Yet, the Renaissance humanist was all too painfully aware of the fact that the self-surpassing energy of the ruins could never be realized, for they could never be made whole again, they would forever remain fragments. Already in the fourteenth century, in a letter to Fra Guglielmo Centuri,

Giovanni Dondi dall'Orologio laments the loss of the past, because the present ruins intimate at the magnificence of a culture that is no more. In fact, the ruins are admired because they point to the loss of a people, not for their formal qualities in themselves:

> But who and what sorts of men those Ancients were, by what customs they lived, what virtues they had, what sorts of actions gained rewards, and what sorts of things were given to those who deserved well, all belong to a bygone age and cannot, like present things, be seen by our eyes or touched with our hands; they can however be recognized by great testimonies and reliable evidence, so that no one who looks carefully can doubt them… . For although time has consumed many of them – even many of the more magnificent – and only ruins of other appear, which present certain traces of what formerly stood, still, those things that remain, fewer and less magnificent, testify abundantly that those who decreed them must have been of great virtue and that something great and worthy of praise must have been enacted by those for whom they were being given for their lasting honor and glory… .[29]

Ruins were a distant memory of what their original state might have been if the humanists had what Pliny had described. Pliny, in his *Natural History*, had described a pagan world filled with architectural and artistic wonders. This world no longer existed; only its faded ruins did. The Christian world, in particular the Renaissance world, was thus disturbed by antiquity as symbol of the great past, a symbol that seduced with its Homeric-pagan siren song, so that it could bring misfortune to those who followed it. On the one hand the pagan past seemed to hint at a world greater than the then present, and thus incited desire and preservation of the ruins, but on the other this same grandiosity incited fear and destruction exactly because of its pagan nature. The fear of the past that lead to the destruction of the indifferent ruin is eloquently captured in a vignette Lorenzo Ghiberti narrated with regards to a statuette found in Siena:

> Signori, cittadini, avendo considerato dapoi noi trouam(m)o questa statua sempre siamo arriuati male, considerato quanto la ydolatria è proibita alla nostra fede, doviamo credere tutte le aduersitá noi abbiamo, Iddio ce le manda per li nostri errori. Et ueggiallo per affecto che dapoi noi honoramo detta statua, sempre siamo iti di male in peggio. Certo mi rendo che per insino noi la terremo in sul nostro terreno, sempre arriveremo male. Sono uno di quelli consiglerei essa si ponesse et tutta si lacerasse et spezassesi ed mandassesi a soppellire in sul terreno de' Fiorenti.[30]

When destruction did not result from Christian zeal, it did instead from the Renaissance systematic despoliation of architectonic fabrics aimed at obtaining construction material to be used in contemporary buildings.[31]

Barkan's connection of such despoliation to a fetishism of the metonym uses a classical definition of Freudian fetishism, according to which a

physical object or a specific situation, meant to stand for female genitalia, arouses erotic desire in a man.[32] The ruin, thus, is a part of a whole that incites desire in a manner similar to a shoe standing for the female body.[33] In this definition, fetishism is a pathology that only males engage in and is never specifically associated with violent tendencies. Yet this is not the only possible operational definition.[34]

Recuperating a Post-Freudian Definition of Fetishism

Fetishism may also be understood as an unconscious defense mechanism against pathology rather than a pathology itself. Sylvia Payne, a student of Freud, expanded on his definition in a paper published in 1939 by asserting that "fetishism is not perverse sexuality but actually saves the individual from a perverse sexuality, the component impulse that would prevail, if not placed under special control, is the sadistic impulse"—the sadistic impulse to kill the love object.[35] Freud had spoken of fetishism, and its scopopholic and coprophilic elements, as a way to deal with castration anxiety and also as a necessity to avoid homosexuality.[36] Payne's theory recasts Freud's negative conception and points out that the fetishist is actually trying to defend himself from his own annihilating tendencies.[37] This suggests that fetishism may be comprised of both sadistic and masochistic tendencies. Masochism, in this case, is the impulse that leads to frustration rather than satisfaction, and thus, to the unsatisfactory satisfaction engendered by frustration.[38] Using Payne's definition of fetishism, it may then be stated that Book I was conceived as the defensive response against the annihilating impulses, sadist and masochist in nature, contained in Book II.

As stated earlier and as pointed out by Melanie Klein, the fetishist's inherent sadism is manifested through a fascination with wires, knots and restraints of all sorts—a fascination that Poliphilo unabashedly shares with the reader throughout Book I. What scholars have identified as his foot or shoe fetish is really a knots, strings and restraints fetish; he is much more concerned with the shoestrings than the shoe itself.[39] Polyphilo's descriptions of the various nymphs he encounters always includes a detailed description of their attire down to their shoes: "These shoes … were tightly laced and fastened with leather thongs pierced by golden pins, or else with loops exquisitely knotted from gold cord."[40]

Interestingly the image that accompanies the text (Figure 9.6) does not show the nymphs displaying ankles or shoes or ties. The image serves to frustrate the hidden desire that the text painstakingly describes:

> Quite a number [of nymphs] wore sandals of pink leather with gilded eyelets, exquisitely adorned with moon-shapes or recurved openings, while from the sole came thongs that made the most novel and amazing ties, tongues and straps that could ever be described, of blue-gray silk and gold filaments, knotted around the plump ankle with such beautiful and graceful entanglements as the mind could ever conceive. The thongs, woven of ultramarine and tied in a graceful knot, issued from the narrow sole and embraced the big toe.[41]

And again: "The small plump feet were kept on their exquisite sandals by elegant gold rings and pearled latchets, and fittingly retained by knotted laces of colored silk and gold with polished silver ends: decorations fit to dazzle and blind even wild bulls."[42]

Given the presence of this type of fetishism, we must assume that violence is to come. If Book I is concerned with the denial and omnipotent idealization aspects of fetishism, Book II, in fact, is concerned with the annihilation of the other and of the self, thus with the impulses underlying the fetishistic response. The body idealized in Book I is destroyed in Book II. The fourth (Figure 9.2) and fifth image of Book II show a landscape with Polia hidden behind a tree, witnessing the devouring of the dismembered body of two women by two mythical beasts. The ruins of Book I are now clearly transformed into women's dismembered body parts. Book II shows us the pure impulses which had been cloaked under architectural metaphors throughout Book I. The impulse to destroy the female body—or its metaphor, antiquity—arises from the inability to deal with the object and its power. As such Poliphilo is powerless with respect to both antiquity and Polia. And as Poliphilo may be said to stand for all humanists, it may also be said that the antique ruins are more powerful than the Renaissance humanists because they do not desire, they only seduce. Polia, too, just like the ruins, does not desire, but only seduces. As Book II tells us, the protagonist falls in love with her at first sight, but she only spurns him and ignores him. Ruins, then, become the perfect metaphor for that ideal woman who never desires but pierces the poet's heart, whether he be Petrarch or Poliphilo. Jean Baudrillard speaks of the objects as cold, malignant, cynical: so close and yet so far away.[43] Polia as object of desire is just as blatantly cold. She is the object that seduces exactly because it is indifferent to the subject's desires. Polia's indifference and subsequent threat of punishment,

as narrated in Book II, is a common motif of certain humanist conceptions of women.[44] In this case, Polia's indifference finds its roots in Boccaccio's tale of *Nastagio degli Onesti*, but it is here more than a mere traditional literary trope: it constitutes a fundamental link between Books I and II.[45]

Cum oroli deorati, gli calciamenti ſopra le niuee ſuffragine cũ ſinuata apertione, reuincti ſtrictamente con fibulati cũ corigie traiectate per le fibule doro, & altramente cũ anſulette di torquei aurei cum exquiſita inno datura cõmendati. Et oue era il confine dilla circunſtantia dille fimbrie, di inexcogitabile cordellatura ornate Da le moderate aure ipulſe le rotunde & elephantine gambe ſpeſſe fiate alquanto manifeſtare.

Elle dunque di me animaduertendo alhora, il Nympheo grado affermando ſteteron, uacabonde dal ſuo dolce canto, repentinamente in uaſe da queſta nouitate di me in quello loco aduenticio. Et mutuaméte marauegliantiſe & curioſe tacitaméte explorantime, inſolente gli apparue & inuſitato. In quella celebre patria homo alieno & extrario cuſi a caſo eſſere puenuto. Per laquale cagione per uno poco di ſpatio ſteteron tra eſſe una allaltra cum ſecreto murmurillo, & molte fiate a rimirarme ſcrutarie iclinantiſe. Quale ſi phantaſma ſtato io fuſſe, Ome io me ſentiua in quel puncto tutte le uiſcere quaſſare. Quale foglie di Accori uibráte ad gli impetuoſi uenti. Impoche apena raſſicurato eſſendo dil crebro dicto ſpauéto, che immediate & meritaméte arbitrádo in ſe hauere, oltra la cõditione hũana, altro nõ conoſcẽdo, dilla diuina uiſiõe dubitai che alla cinerea, Se mele appue, Dalla ſimulata forma di Beroe Epidaura decepta. Heu me da capo ícomíciai di trepidare, piu timido diuenuto, che li pauidi hymnuli la fulua Leena di fame rugiéte uedẽdo. Tra me cõtẽdéteſe ad terra ſuppli-

Figure 9.6 Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, Venetiis: in aedibus Aldi Manutii, 1499 (Vienna, Austrian National Library, Ink. 4.E.9, fol. 38v), *Poliphilo meets a group of nymphs*.

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Poliphilo tries to dominate the object—woman/ruin—in order to possess it, to erotically possess it. But in the act of possession, as mentioned earlier, is also inherent in the sadistic impulse to annihilate the object, to desire its death. Death conceived as the interruption of the individual other, releases the subject from its obsession, thus providing a pleasurable release akin to that of orgasm. The crueler the death is, the greater the pleasure. Book II does not spare the reader any details of the cannibalistic dismemberment of the female body. The text noxiously amplifies and methodically explores that which the image does not convey, so that nothing is left to the reader's imagination; no escape is provided, and the reader is attacked by both image and text. The sadistic destruction of the object is moved by the need to annihilate the castrating and castrated female: it is the need of annihilating Polia as Medusa/frigid nymph.[46] In Book II Polia, in fact, is clearly portrayed as a cold, unfeeling and frigid female that causes the male's protagonist almost-death, while in Book I she is referred to in such a way only in a veiled manner. If in Book II her indifference is almost malignant, in Book I she is serenely indifferent to the suffering of Poliphilo. It is a suffering that she actually seems to invite and then dispassionately observe: Christian compassion for suffering is not the Medusa's moral compass. It should also be noted that, as Freud correctly pointed out, the Medusa turned men to stone, and only men, because she embodies castration fears.[47] It is the fear of the female genitals conceived of as a wound resulting from castration. The ruins become an excellent metaphor for the female/medusa and her wound: they are no longer whole, no longer standing.

Yet the pulsion to sadistically destroy the object is not the only factor contributing to the formation of the fetishist's response. As Sylvia Payne discussed, a masochistic wish of death of the self is the other component from which the fetishist protects himself. The equation between love and suffering, love and death of the self, had already been made in ancient times; Propertius, for example, wonderfully equated love to the loss of identity:

> A thousand times, I will find you on my doorstep/rejected, whimpering, all your brave words lost/in gulping sobs, your white face, lined and ravaged, showing how much this love of yours has cost;/ and at that you would say, your vain complaining/garbled, your own identity unsure …[48]

The Renaissance rediscovers this powerful reality of interruption of personality and thus, along with it, the morbid attractions of the cult of death and suffering, while searching for a way to preserve itself from the masochistic wish of self-annihilation.[49] The morbid attraction to suffering was further nourished and vitalized by the Christian's focus on suffering and self-abnegation. Indeed Poliphilo enjoys his Herculean suffering, and the reader is, thus, treated to his endless lamentations. The following citations are deliberately numerous in number so as capture the emotional assault a reader is made to experience at Poliphilo's words: "Thus I cheefully expose myself to death, rather than living a miserable and painful life without your longed for affection: better to perish instantly than to die daily… .";[50] "… I am consumed with fire in your absence, my radiant sun Polia … how I have spent so long a time in utter deprivation and in fearful peril of my life";[51] "I suffer dreadfully from this gnawing emotion that wears me down with continuous suffering";[52] "That is why, O Polia worthy of adoration, I count it a good thing, ever-glorious and most praiseworthy, to die for love of you and for the untoward cruelty of Cupid."[53] Only to lament his cruel fate just a few lines later: "… I feel sure that I have fallen into the mouth of the Calydonian Boar or the dreadful Python, and am being crunched by its gnashing, foamy teeth; or else I am in the lion's fangs, which lacerate my flesh as they devour me";[54] "My fury has increased to the point at which I could not longer feel any pain, indeed was goaded on to greater agitation and spurred by single-minded love, with a ferocity that only increased my tolerance."[55] Poliphilo is the Christian martyr who willingly suffers on the pagan altar: "I have offered my heart to you in a holocoust upon the burning flame of love like the priests sacrificing to Bellona, and have voluntarily consigned my life to your will and command."[56] His *passio* is felt all the more deeply because of the inflicted suffering: "Mortal anguish [alone] does not necessarily make for sensual pleasure, but that pleasure is more deeply felt during mortal anguish."[57] So death of the self becomes a pleasurable erotic release, the eternal amplification of the *petite mort*, for it annihilates the discontinuity that separates the individual from eternity. Death becomes the ultimate morbid/erotic lover who releases the other into eternity.

Fetishism: Eros and Thanatos

The binary relationship of Eros and Thanatos is a motif already present in Italian medieval literature, as evidenced by Petrarch's ekphrastic triumphs, which inspired the *Hypnerotamachia'*s own.[58] In the latter, ekphrases and images of the triumphs further confirm that the Eros/Thanatos pulsions engender the fetishistic position: Book I contains the illustrations and description of the *Triumphs of Eros*, while Book II contains the illustrations and description of the *Triumphs of Death* (Thanatos).[59] Though, in the case of Book I, it is more opportune to speak of triumphs of lust and destruction than of love: the triumphal processions in fact feature Jupiter as a swan copulating with Leda and as a golden shower, ravishing Danae. This is not the triumph of humanly love, but of divine rapes, of violent possession by the omnipotent power of the ultimate object, the mortal woman. There is no celebration of a life offering resolution.[60] This is a narrative devoid of mortal consummation, very much in keeping with the medieval tradition of Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch. It foreshadows the death that follows the triumph of lusts: Poliphilo is bound in fetters to Polia and joins the train of *Eros Victor*:

> Seating himself, the triumphant boy gave a nod, and straightaway we two, Polia and I, were seized and captured by the noble nymphs Plexaura and Ganoma. Our arms were pulled back and our hands held behind us, then Polia and I were tied and bound like captives with ropes and garlands of roses and other flowers all woven and netted together. Then, gently and willingingly we were attached by the noble nymph Synesia behind the pompous and divine chariot of the triumphant victor and prizewinner.[61]

The original function of the Roman triumph is rescued. Polia and Poliphilo are the captives lead to death by *Eros Imperator*, a death that is realized only in Book II.

Thus, the lustful desire of Book I leads to death in Book II, a logical sequence that is prefigured as well by the steles of the Polyandron (in Book I), the *locus amoenus* of death.[62] The complicated link between life and death is articulated not only through the visual experience of setting ruins in lush natural surroundings, but also through the epitaphs and their epigrammatic stories. Each story confronts the reader with several ways to construe death and love in the underworld, though all constructions lead to the same locus. Of course, it is desire that leads Poliphilo to these constructions. It is the Eros of death. Ruined bits and pieces of antiquity tell stories of sexual coupling that literally end in death. The stones cleverly speak to Poliphilo, and to us, through text and images.

This series of dead lovers functions as a caveat and a reinforcement for Poliphilo to persist in his fetishistic behavior. He fears consummation to the extent that not only does the act of reading the epitaphs and their deathly stories raises his anxieties, but so does the act of looking itself, of having violated a sacred space, which in turn intensifies the feelings of destruction.[63] Poliphilo's reading of the stories narrated by the dead becomes then akin to an act of rape—looking is rape—and is mirrored in the last epitaph, on which he reads the story of Proserpina's rape. Ruins have been issuing death warnings since antiquity,[64] but in the *Hypnerotomachia* they speak the language of mosaics, of combination of fragments, dismembered bodies, dismembered text discursive debris.[65]

The hieroglyphs, in particular, become then a marvelous 'new' language of death. They become the perfect union of image and text, where the text itself is visual and must be deciphered. As Barkan states, the visual narrative involves decipherment, thus the hieroglyphs as textual and visual narrative are fundamental to the hermeneutic activity that the *Hypnerotomachia* demands.[66] The interpreting of the languages, be they hieroglyphs or unknown ones, leads to transgression and therefore to pleasure of such nature that one must defend himself against it.[67] Trespassers shall be, in fact, punished to the full extent of the law, as the one clear instance of completed text on a fragmented vase warns: "Amans Amentis." Eros leads to the loss of mind, the loss of personality, which again equates to death.

It is against this loss of personality that the fetishistic response is formed and used, and whose etiological moment may be identified in Book II. In the scene of Poliphilo's death there occurs the only instance of actual physical touch between Polia and Poliphilo. She touches the dead protagonist's cold feet *ardeliamente*—his Achilles heel, to be exact.[68] The Freudian association is certainly historically coherent considering that in ancient Greek πουσ-ποδοσ was slang for penis; a linguistic detail certainly known to the author. It is by postulating this moment, and its accompanying image, as ground zero that it is possible to state that Book II was written before Book I, as well as purposely placed in second order upon its publication. Book I is the *involucrum integumentum* of Book II because it hides the etiological moment buried deep at the end of the whole literary *oeuvre*.

This is the scene that is feared and desired throughout Book I and its metaphors of deferred desire. It is because of this fear that the only existence the castrating woman is allowed to have is that of living as text on an epitaph in a dream within a dream. It is because of this fear that the relationship between text and images in the *Hypnerotomachia* is one of continuous excitement and frustration, anticipation and postcipation of desire. As Polia's entrance is cloaked in death so is her exit; just as in a Greek tragedy (*Alcestis, The Suppliants, Hippolytus, Oedipus Rex, Antigone, Iphigenia*, etc.), the only exit for a woman is that of death.[69] Even her image is too powerful, thus she is slowly visually eliminated and returned to her nonexistence.

Notes

1 This essay revises material first presented at a seminar conducted by Leonard Barkan at the Institute of Fine Arts, NYU (spring semester 1999) and subsequently elaborated and presented at the American Association for Italian Studies (Colorado Springs, 2007) and the Renaissance Society of America (Los Angeles, 2009). The editions used throughout the essay are two: A, Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili: The Strife of Love in a Dream,* translated with an introduction by Joscelyn Godwin (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999). This is the most recent English translation and is used for all the citations given in English; B, Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, translated and edited by Marco Ariani and Mino Gabriele (Milan: Adelphi, 1998). This most recent Italian translation is comprised of two volumes: the first volume contains a reprographic reproduction of the original 1499 Aldine edition, the second volume contains an Italian translation accompanied by extensive commentaries. This edition is thus used for all citations in the original language. The two editions have the same page numbering with regards to the original text.

2 Colonna (1999, 402); "Et il puello da lui ogni humanitate remota, le percite fancifulle l'ultimo pianto et voce prolata plectebondo, in due particione secoe. Et reserato il femello pecto suo, il vivace core detraxe. Et quello ad gli feri volatili projecto. Et le fumante viscere alle sceve Aquile. Et il residuo degli pallidi corpi inquartato ad gli rabidi animali iactato." Colonna (1998, 402).

3 Oettinger (2011, 20) and Trippe (2004, 302) are among the few scholars to have noted the violence of Book II, though their analysis of it is limited to noticing its Boccaccian source in the Decameron's story of *Nastagio degli Onesti.*

4 Giovanni Pozzi is the first scholar to have extensively examined the relationship between text and image, yet many are the significant contributions that have followed. I have here listed those of particular note. Colonna (1980), Pozzi (1981), Agamben (1982), Pozzi (1993, 115–43), Szépe (1996), Trippe (2002), Trippe (2004) and Oettinger (2011).

5 Numerous scholars who have studied the *Hypnerotomachia* have noted the difference in narrative tone between the two tomes, but few have suggested a reason for it, or have analyzed the differences. Trippe (2004) is one of the few scholars to have analyzed it through the lens of mendicant preaching *exempla* and to have suggested a continuity between volumes I and II in terms of the relationship between text and image; in so doing, though, she ignores the juxtaposition between the violence of Book II and the romantic longing of Book I.

6 The identity of the translator is not secure: most scholars identify it with Robert Dallington on the strength of the initials "R.D." found at the end of the dedicatory note; the work was dedicated to Robert Devoraux, Earle of Essex and Ewe. See Semler (2006). Trippe (2004, 5, note 10), instead proposes the name John Harington, who completed a translation of the *Orlando Furioso* into English by 1591. The name is erroneously given as 'Hartington' instead of 'Harington' (though Harrington is also acceptable). Prior to its English translation, the *Hypnerotomachia* was first published in Paris by Jacques Kerver with a translation into French 'reviewed' (*revue*) by Jean Martin, in editions of 1546, 1554 and 1561.

7 It is difficult to estimate the number of copies of this original print run, given that so few first edition copies have survived intact. A census of surviving copies was carried out by Cadelano (1998, 191). She also notes that the German, but naturalized Italian, editor and publisher Giovanni Marderstieg estimated that the Aldine press runs for such editions run around 500 to 600 copies. The question of the *Hypnerotomachia*'s language has been discussed by Gnoli (1899), by Pozzi in Colonna (1980, vol. 2, 11–13), Patricia Brown (1996, 211), Agamben (1982, 470–74) Ariani and Gabriele in Colonna (1998, lxiii–xc), Godwin in Colonna (1999, ix–x), and Trippe (2004), *passim*.

8 Most scholars agree on identifying author Francesco Colonna with the Venetian friar by the same name: Casella and Pozzi (1959, 5–106), Ariani and Gabriele in Colonna (1998, lxiii–xc), Trippe (2002) and Trippe (2004).

9 Lefaivre (1997) has proposed Alberti as the author of the work. This authorship is also supported by Schmeiser (2003) and by Goebel (2006). On the basis of a highly conjectural study, the Roman scholar Maurizio Calvesi argues instead that Francesco Colonna was a member of the noble Roman Colonna family: Calvesi (1965, 1980, 1996). Espositi (2014) discusses Colonna's family villa at Palestrina in the Lazio and identifies a number of its architectonic features as the source of inspiration for those in the *Hypnerotomachia*; Stewering (1996, 2000), on the other hand, proposed as author the Trevisan–Paduan Niccolò Lelio Cosimico, based on a possible familial relationship between the letterato and the bishop of Treviso, Teodoro Lelli, who is identified in the *Hypnerotomachia* as Polia's uncle.

10 Ariani and Gabriele in Colonna (1998, lxiii–xc). In these same pages Ariani and Gabrieli also give an exhaustive synopsis of the various arguments *pro* and *contra* Colonna's authorship. For a summary of the authorship problem in the English language, see also Patricia Brown (1996, 287–90).

11 The term 'technopaegnia' was first used by the Renaissance humanist Fortunius Licetus (1577–1654) to refer to poems or prose written and/or printed in a shape usually pertinent to the subject of the text itself. The practice of visual or patterned poems has a long history dating back to classical Greece. In prose, chapter endings usually took on the form of vases, cups or urns as they do in the *Hypnerotomachia*. In the Renaissance such 'shapes' were often thought to have lend a spiritual or magical aura to the text. "Figure Poems": http://www.camrax.com/symbol/figurepoemsintro.php4, last accessed on 6.15.15.

12 The dark wood or *silva* is a Dantesque and Petrarchan motif that alludes to base sexual impulses, a savage carnality. As we shall discuss later, the *silva* is also the site of a number of violent actions against the female body. See Ariani and Gabriele's exhaustive discussion of the classical and vernacular sources of the silva in Ariani and Mino Gabriele in Colonna (1998, 521–4; 9, note 2). On Petrarchan imitation in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Medin (1904) and Folena (1964). On the concept and importance of imitation, see Pigman (1980) and Trippe (2004, 142–3).

13 Stewering (2000).

14 Poliphilo's list of the countless unhappy loves cannot but strike the reader as being rather ironic. It is as if the author's intention was not to inspire compassion and sadness at the terrible fate each couple meets, but rather the opposite, to inspire hilarity and disbelief. While a

discussion on irony in the *Hypnerotomachia* goes beyond the scope of this essay, I agree with both Wind (1948, 27–34) and Trippe (2004, 20–1; 316–28) in finding that irony is indeed one of the contexts against which the Hypnerotomachia should be analyzed.

15 The sources used by Francesco Colonna in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* are countless. Gabriele and Ariani (Colonna 1998, vol. 2) give a full account of multitude of such sources—from the *Roman de la Rose* to Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Trippe (2004, 22) and Trippe (2002) disagrees and emphasizes Petrarchan influences; Fumagalli (1984) and Boury (2013) have paid particular attention to Apuleius.

16 Biadego (1900–1) first proposed that the carver with the initial of "b" was none other than the Paduan illuminator Benedetto Bordon (*c.* 1480–1539). While Ariani and Gabriele (Colonna 1998, xcviii–ciii), do not exclude the presence of Bordon, they suggest that the drawings were executed by Colonna, but that the execution of the woodcuts may be attributed to at least three different artists, two of whom were identified by their monograms (cr) and (av) and must have been part of a very active workshop since their monograms appear on numerous xylographies executed in Venice. Szépe (1993, 44–5) also opposes the idea that all woodcuts may be attributed to a single master as Biadego believed; Giehlow (1915) thought that the hieroglyphs, in particular, were to be attributed to the Franciscan friar Urbino da Bolzano. Donati (1957) proposed the name of the Florentine painter Benozzo Gozzoli on the basis of observed similarities between the dance of Fortune in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* and illustrations executed for the editor Francesco di Jacopo della Spera. Calvesi (1996, 165), of course, suggests that the author of the woodcuts needs to be found in the central Italian artistic milieu, and while he accepts Donati's proposal he also further suggests the names of Pinturicchio and Botticelli. Scarsella (2009, 47–52) instead proposed the names of Apollonio di Giovanni and Melozzo da Forlì.

17 The problem of visual discrepancies between images and text was first discussed by Ilg (1872, 129); Donati (1950, 1975) analyzed the images to support the idea that woodcuts were executed following preexisting drawings by the author for, he argues, if the cutter and the drawings' author were the same person, there would have never occurred any errors of interpretation, while visual discrepancies occur a number of times. Most recently, they have been discussed by Ariani and Gabriele (Colonna 1998, xcvii–viii). Trippe (2004, 46–56), believes that some of these discrepancies are used to create the same confusion experienced by Poliphilo in his dream state—a state that she believes may be specifically identified with an insomnium or false dream, as first described by Macrobius.

18 Pozzi (1981), Pozzi and Ciapponi in Colonna (1980, 12–13) and Pozzi (1993, 127).

19 Trippe (2002, 1240).

20 Ariani and Gabriele in Colonna (1998, 359–60).

21 Ariani and Gabriele in Colonna (1998, 361).

22 Joscelyn Godwin in Colonna (1999, 149). "Et postala nella sua, strengerla sentiva tra calda neve et infra coagulo lacteo. […] cum plebeo habito pannoso, et cui isciochi et vulgari costumi, difforme a llei istimantime inepto et dissimile di tale consortio […]"; Ariani and Gabrieli in Colonna (1998, 149).

23 Joscelyn Godwin in Colonna (1998, 150). "Quivi fervidamente tacto di piacevoli ardori, paulatini vegetantese incominciarono di riscaldare et succendere la frigida paura et l'alterato calore ad uno amore sincero dispositivamente adaptare." Ariani and Gabriele in Colonna (1999, 150).

24 Alonzo (1961), Herczeg (1961), Mazzotta (1993, 58–79) and Trippe (2004, 154–5).

25 Poliphilo's focus on his own shameful appearance is a theme found, instead, in Boccaccio's *Ninfale d'Ameto*. Trippe (2002, 1242).

26 Trippe (2002, 1238).

27 I agree with Trippe that the images are meant to purposely evoke the dream state as experienced by Poliphilo, but I believe the manipulation of the viewers' reactions goes beyond it, for it is meant to evoke a specific type of erotic response.

28 Leonard Barkan, oral comment on *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* at NYU IFA seminar, spring 1999. For a discussion on fragments and their renaissance 'reception' see Barkan (1999, 135–6).

29 Gilbert (1977, 341–42). Giovanni Dondi was a scholar at the University of Pavia, and records indicate him as the inventor, along with Jacopo Dondi, of two marvelous clocks. Fra' Guglielmo Centeuri, also known as Frau Guglielmo da Cremona, was active in the Franciscan *studium generale* of Pavia and became bishop of Pavia sometime after 1382. He, too, was associated with the University of Pavia.

30 Ghiberti (1998, 109).

31 While the literature on the subjects is rather vast, the following titles might be of use to frame the discourse. On the use of spolia in the Renaissance, see Bolgar (1964), Weiss (1988), Jacks (1993), Bosman (2004), Burns (1971), Koortbojian (2011), Karmon (2011) and Hansen (2015). Artists such as Raphael and humanists such as Poggio Bracciolini and Leon Battista Alberti all lamented the despoliation of the ancient world to the benefit of their culture; see Pearson (2011).

32 Leonard Barkan, oral comment on *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, NYU IFA seminar, spring 1999.

33 Strictly speaking, clinicians today refer to such fetishism as 'partialism,' as defined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5), American Psychiatric Association (2013).

34 Fetishism is a topic that in the past century was treated by a number of psychiatrists, psychologists and sexologists—e.g. Alfred Binet, Magnus Hirschfeld, Sigmund Freud and Donald Winnicott—thus giving rise to a variety of operational definitions. Although in the past most definitions were applicable only to male patients, today's definitions encompass psychological mechanisms that give rise to female fetishists. For a development of fetishist theories, see Bienvenu (1998), Gates (1999), Kaplan (1991, 2006), Love (1994), Steele (1996) and Utley (2002).

35 Payne (1939, 169). While it might at first appear odd that I revive a definition of fetishism given in 1939, particularly as Payne's work is not commonly known outside of psychoanalytic circles, her work has nevertheless served as the fundamental building block for many modern and contemporary theories on fetishism. She was a seminal influence on the work of renowned British analyst William Gillespie, and much of his own 1940s research into fetishism confirmed Payne's earlier theories; Gillespie (1995, 37). Her work is quoted by a number of other contemporary studies on fetishism; see Gamman and Makinen (1994, 112), Cowie (1997, 366, note 165), Eby (1999, 16; 115; 183; 312), Gemerchak (2004, 80, note 6), Caldwell (2005, 59) and Böhme (2014, 354).

36 Freud (1950).

37 The male gender pronoun is here consciously used since, in Freudian analysis, the fetishist is always a man; Freud (1950).

38 Klein (1932).

39 However problematic many of Liane Lefaivre's arguments might be with regards to the *Hypnerotomachia,* she successfully demonstrated Poliphilo's fetishist position towards architecture; see Lefaivre (1991). Ariani and Gabriele's discussion of Poliphilo's fetishim is noted throughout their insightful commentary to their translation of the *Hypnerotamachia Poliphili;* Colonna (1998). For the erotic overtones of architecture found in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili,* see also Goebel (1971, 60–1), Hersey (1976, 100–2), Bredekamp (1985), Hedrick (1987), Stewering (1996, 24–9; 128–38) and Stewering (2000, 6–25).

Godwin in Colonna (1999, 76); "[…] gli calciamenti sopra le nivee suffragine cum sinuata
40 apertione, revincti strictamente confibulati cum corigie traiectate per le fibule d'oro, et altramente cum ansulette di torquei aurei […]" Ariani and Gabriele in Colonna (1998, 76).

41 Godwin in Colonna (1999, 334); "Assai le crepidule di rosaceo corio portavano orulate d'oro. Tale exquisitamente di expolito et lunato calciamine calciate, overamente cum recurvata apertura, et diamantate solee, cum più nove & maravegliose ligature, ligule & coregie, che mai dir se potesse, di seta caesia & di filamine doro, cum gli più vagi et grati iplicamenti circa il polposo talo innodantise, che divisare nella mente se valesse, et dall'angusta solea il laqeolo in nodulo bellulamente intricato, di armenica textura usciva impedito tenendo il police digito […]." Ariani and Gabriele in Colonna (1998, 334).

42 Godwin in Colonna (1999, 334); "Sopra le exquisite crepidule gli tumiduli pecioli suppressi dagli eleganti streuli asulati d'oro, et gli obstraguli margaritati, et cum nextruli di colorita seta et d'oro cum gli capi di terso argento infixi, erano decentemente innexi ritenuti, cum si bello decoramento da cecare et exoculare gli effrenati tori." Ariani and Gabriele in Colonna (1998, 334).

43 As Baudrillard has discussed in a number of his works, the subject, the individual, can only desire, but it is only the object that has the power of seduction: "le sujet ne peut que desirer, seul l'objet peut seduire." Baudrillard (1983, 163).

44 See, for example, "leaving him there with derision and contempt for his vain words" or "I fixed him with an unfriendly and stern expression and wrinkled brow, more unyielding than Daphne and more impious than Medea; more evil than Atreus and Thyestes, more dire than Theseus, more reluctant than Narcissus and much more indifferent than Anaxarete to her lover Iphis." Godwin in Colonna (1999, 392, 396); "Et d'indi lassato lo parvifacte come vane parole, io fugiti deridendolo" or "cum displicebile et torvo aspecto et caperata fronte mirantilo. Durissima più che Daphne. Più scelerata di Medea. Più iniqua di Atreo et Thyste. Più dira di Theseo. Più perfuga di Narciso molto più aspera di Anaxarte al suo Iphi crudele." Ariani and Gabriele in Colonna (1998, 392; 396).

45 The story of *Nastagio degli Onesti*, as narrated in the *Decameron* (eighth tale of the fifth day) narrates the tale of a cold woman who rejects and gloats over her suffering lover, who in turn commits suicide. For eternity, they are condemned to pursuit and flight. Whenever he catches her, he kills her. He plunges a dagger into her back, tears out her cold heart and feeds it and her viscera to his hunting dogs. Then she comes back to life and the chase resumes. Nastagio, courting his own proud woman, holds a banquet on the site of the chase so that the guests and his indifferent beloved may witness it all. It must be noted, though, that Colonna does not seem to directly refer to this tale or any other tales found in the *Decameron*. This notable absence has led some scholars to suggest that Colonna was here attempting to follow a more elevated literary tradition; Trippe (2002, 1253). As noted by Trippe (2002, 1252, note 103), Casella and Pozzi (1959, vol. 2, 313) already recorded such notable absences.

46 Both Freud's and Payne's notions of fetishism envision the female figure as threatening castration of the male figure. For a discussion on the genesis of Freud's ideas of the Oedipus complex and fears of castration, see Laplanche and Pontalis (1973).

47 Freud (1997).

48 Propertius (1990, I.5.1–6; 13–27) and Sourvinou-Inwood (1995, 13).

49 On the idea of death as a rapturous force at the center of a desire for the ultimate knowledge of the begining and for its conception in the Renaissance, see Ariès (1974, 145).

50 Godwin in Colonna (1999, 390); "E per novissimo refugio di questo, nel presente il morire meglio mi sia, che erumnosamente et sencia il tuo amore vivere." Ariani and Gabriele in Colonna (1998, 390).

51 Godwin in Colonna (1999, 391); "Cusi io nella tua absentatione Polia Sole mio irradiatinsissimo, io tuto adusto infevescente… . che tanto protracto di tempo in suprema

angustia et formidabili periculi del viviere mio me ho ritrovato." Ariani and Gabriele in Colonna (1998, 391).

52 Godwin in Colonna (1999, 393); "Per la quale cusi dolorasamente patisco per questo mortificante affecto" Ariani and Gabriele in Colonna (1998, 391).

53 Godwin in Colonna (1999, 394); "Il perchè Polia di venerato dignissima, bella cosa et eterna gloria, et perclara laude, per tuo amore morire mi suado, et per inconveniente feritate di Cupidine." Ariani and Gabriele in Colonna (1998, 394).

54 Godwin in Colonna (1999, 394–95); "sencia dubbio derivato parmi essere tra la bucca cum attrito di denti sonace et spumea del Apro Calidonio, et tra Phitone horrendo, et tra la framea leonina, che elli la carne mia lancinanti devorano." Ariani and Gabriele in Colonna (1998, 394–5).

55 Godwin in Colonna (1999, 392); "Niente dimeno fingeva multiplice, et varie cose nel animo mio simulando prosperamente venture, molti subsidii, solatii, et suppetii meco verisimili componeva, & cose di mira magnificentia d'amore a mi medesimo largamente prometeva" Ariani and Gabriele in Colonna (1998, 392).

56 Godwin in Colonna (1999, 453); "il mio holocausto core immolato, quale facevano gli Sacederdoti sacrificando ad Bellona, et consignatoti il vivere mio, ultroneamente al tuo arbitrio et volere." Ariani and Gabriele in Colonna (1998, 453).

57 Bataille (1986, 104).

58 Petrarch's poem *I trionfi* (the Triumphs) was published in the fourteenth century, and its description of the various processions served as inspiration for a number of artists' conception of the triumph. Apollonio di Giovanni, Domenico di Michelino, Pesellino, Mantegna, Domenico di Zanobi, Francesco di Antonio del Chierico, Bartolomeo Sanvito and Rosselli are among the artists to have illustrated the literary descriptions of Petrarch's Triumphs.

59 The figurative rendering of the *Hypnerotomachia*'s triumphs closely recall those of Andrea Mantegna executed in 1506. Mantegna's inventions, though, were painted in an attempt to recreate an image of a Roman triumph that was at once splendid and yet historically and archeologically plausible. One may argue that Colonna's triumphs attempt to do the same, but it is rather clear that the intention is erotic rather than archeological faithfulness. On the connections between the *Hypnerotomachia* and Mantegna, see Nygren (2015).

60 In the Middle Ages, the lack of resolution was limited to the visual arts alone, as Olds *et al.* (1976, 5), point out: "rarely do scenes of courtship fall within a narrative sequence which involves the physical consummation of the affair, and rarely do scenes of death precede resurrection and salvation."

61 Godwin in Colonna (1999, 341); "Sedendo dunque ello sencia protracto di tempo prensi et capti ambi dui fussimo, Polia, et io dalle praestante nymphe Plexaura et Ganoma, per lo imperatorio nuto dil triumphante puellulo dominante, et reiecte da retro di ambi dui le brace, et al tergo restricte le mane, come captivi Polia et io fussimo illaqueati & vincti, cum trece et serticuli di rose et vario floramine connexi et resticulti. Et retro alla pomposa, et diviata rheda dil athlophoro, et maximo triumphatore eramo tracti molliculamente voluntabondi da Synesia nympha praestantissima." Ariani and Gabriele in Colonna (1998, 341).

62 In the Early Modern period, the idea of the *locus amoenus* of death, where one may visit the dead, came to be developed as a feast of the senses compared to our contemporary pallid idea of a cemetery. Between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries, in the Capuchin convent of Palermo, for example, thousands of mummified bodies were housed in underground corridors organized by gender, age, profession and social class. Hanging vertically row upon row, these bodies were regularly visited on Sunday by their relatives, in a ritual that Baudrillard (1983, 182) described as akin to a mass or theater.

63 Barkan (1999, 146).

64 Sourvinou-Inwood (1995, 13). “So when I die at last, and nothing of me / is left save on a marble slab my name, / Maecenas, you our greatest boast and envy whose friendship is my only claim to fame / if in your carven British chariot you journey / near to my silent dust, O pause beside / that lonely tomb and say, it was for Cynthia, / for love of heartless Cynthia, that he died.” Propertius (1990, II. 1.73–80).

65 Baudrillard (1983).

66 Barkan (1999, 135; 136).

67 As mentioned by Castellani, the Renaissance morbid curiosity for death often led to the reopening of tombs. The act of reopening itself may be conceived of as a transgression of a taboo: seeking pleasure within the horrific. See Mathieu-Castellani (1988).

68 Godwin, in Colonna (1999, 397), does not translate the word, stating simply “I grabbed him by his cold feet.” Ariani and Gabriele, in Colonna (1998, 397), translate *ardeliamente* as “con foga.” *Foga* and thus *ardeliamente* may be translated as “with an impetuous fiery gesture.”

69 For an in-depth discussion of the role of women in Greek tragedy, see Loraux (1984) and Foley (2002).

10 Drunkenness, Sex and Desire in Titian's *Bacchanal of the Andrians*

François Quiviger

Figure 10.1 Titian, *Bacchanal of the Andrians*, 1523–6, oil on canvas, 175 cm × 193 cm. Madrid, Museo del Prado, P00418.

The birth and rise of pornography, from Renaissance subgenre to twentieth-century multimedia industry, is perhaps less a sign of emancipation than another symptom of Foucault's grand narrative of the history of sexuality. The increasing control and censorship of sexual matters observed by Foucault runs in parallel with the rise of sensuousness in painting and the expansion of erotic imagery addressed to masculine private consumption. Thus we might hypothesize that by setting up some of the imagery of Western pornography Renaissance artists like Titian inaugurated a long and fruitful period of male solitary fantasizing of the female body mediated by the sensuous revival of ancient art.

Indeed, Titian's *Bacchanal of the Andrians* (Figure 10.1), which is the subject of this essay, is among the foundation stones of Western erotic art and pornography. The picture describes the drunkenness of the inhabitants of Island of Andros when the god Bacchus transformed the water of their rivers into wine, following the account of Philostratus' *Imagines*.[1] This oil on canvas, part of a larger cycle, decorated the private apartments of the Duke of Ferrara Alfonso d'Este (1476–1534). To examine this important work in the context of the theme of the present volume I will proceed in three parts. After introductory considerations on the culture of viewing brought by the demands of Christian art on Renaissance audiences and artists, I will focus on the historiography of *The Bacchanal of the Andrians* and explore Titian's libidinal use of Renaissance pictorial motives.

Cultural and Pictorial Context

Writing in the early teens of the twenty-first century it is somehow impossible to approach historical aspects of sexuality without referring to Michel Foucault's much quoted and debated *Histoire de la Sexualité*. According to Foucault the Western concept of sexuality grew during the Christian middle ages and bloomed from the seventeenth century onwards. For Foucault 'sexuality' is the 'textualisation' (*mise en discours*) of sex and as such it is an agent of control and repression particularly favored from the Counter-Reformation onwards.[2] Renaissance scholars have contested this characterisation, objecting that many aspects of sexuality were repressed well before the seventeenth century.[3] Still, Foucault's observation that there is less written about sexuality before the seventeenth century, rather than after, remains valid and suggests that turning to the visual arts may reveal

candid expressions of desire mediated by images rather than controlled by words.

For this purpose we should use iconology with considerable caution. This standard method of analyzing Early Modern imagery expands from the literal to the conceptual, from the physical to the verbal. If we want to use images as documents for the history of sexuality, we should think in reverse and progress from the conceptual to the bodily, from signification to senses, from symbolic to pictorial matters.

Such an approach is particularly relevant to Renaissance art, which takes the main focus of sexual desire as its principal subject: the human body. The tale is well known. At the core of Renaissance art education is the acquisition of what we might call a grammar of the human body.[4] From the fifteenth to the nineteenth century plenty of evidence confirms that apprentice painters first learned to draw eyes, nose, mouth, ears, hands and feet, then human anatomy from bones, to muscles to skin and clothes.[5] This training aimed at preparing professional artists to depict the human body in any position without needing a model. Thus in Renaissance art the human figure is a malleable entity, an organic vocabulary modeled on human anatomy engaging with the body awareness and sensory experience of the artist and the audience.

Renaissance artists' obsession with liveliness generated the *Paragone* debate, which opposed painting and sculpture in playful rivalry.[6] While moderately interesting in itself, the *Paragone* provides clues and concepts towards understanding two major pictorial elements, which also happen to be carriers of erotic energies: the figure with multiple views and the suggestively tactile theme of relief. From Cimabue to Caravaggio this conception of image making came in response to the demands of religion and religious patronage. Broadly speaking, late medieval piety focused on the humanity of Christ. Thus, the Church commissioned didactic images suitable to prompt intense empathy with the actors of the Gospel, especially Christ as a newborn child or as the suffering god of the Passion.[7]

Empathy, a concept elaborated in the nineteenth century, is about personally experiencing how someone else feels.[8] Recent advances in neuroscience have provided the organic basis of this particular complex of activities and identified mirror neurons as the system by which we can experience what we witness, in reality or in representation, as if we were ourselves involved.[9] The phrase did not exist before the 1990s but surely the

faculty was active; it just had another name: imagination, to which medieval and Renaissance authors unanimously granted the power to re-create the present. Religious education trained this faculty. From the *Meditations on the life of Christ* to Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* devotional literature exhorted and trained audiences to imagine themselves present as the Gospel narrative unfolds in their imagination.[10]

Thus, by the sixteenth century religion and religious art had trained Western audiences to imagine themselves present and imagine how the actors of painting, Christ in particular, must have felt in their flesh. Eventually the human figure became the central subject of Renaissance art and the focus of its appreciation. By the 1560s a Counter-Reformation writer like Giovanni Andrea Gilio observed that painters had lost interest in narratives and focused on displaying their skill at making anatomically interesting figures without regard to the didactic, mnemonic and inspirational functions of religious art.[11]

From the fifteenth century onwards, running in parallel with the rise of naturalism in religious art, the passionate rediscovery of ancient art provided artists with convincing models to further develop the representation of the human figure. By the sixteenth century artistic education focused on studying from live models, modern masters and ancient art. In other words the demands of Christian art for naturalism constituted the cradle of the reception and adaptation of ancient art. Thus pagan imagery was revived within the viewing habits bred by religious art and education: the culture of imagining oneself in the figures depicted, the culture of apprehending figurative art in an empathic way.

To understand Renaissance mythological painting, still a new genre in the 1520s when Titian was working for Alfonso d'Este, we should approach it with categories tested and tried in religious art. Thus to examine the *Bacchanal of the Andrians* I propose to focus on the human figure and the empathic reactions it was intended to trigger; to observe figures outside their narrative context; to look at the empathic requirement of medieval piety as formative of the pictorial adaptation of ancient statuary and envisage adopting, at least playfully, an empathic approach to Titian's Bacchic evocation.

To explore and follow these hypotheses, I will first summarize the historiography of the *Bacchanal of the Andrians*. I will then move on to the range of sensations represented and addressed by the picture and thirdly,

shifting from the sensory to the painterly, I will focus on the pictorial themes deployed by Titian.

Historiography

Titian's *Bacchanal of the Andrians*, painted around 1523–4, belongs to a mythological cycle commissioned for the Camerino, or private apartments, of Alfonso I d'Este, in Ferrara. The main paintings include Giovanni Bellini's *Banquet of the Gods*, the *Worship of Venu*s and the *Bacchanal of the Andrians* by Titian, as well as another *Bacchanal* attributed to Dosso Dossi. All along the room are reliefs by Antonio Lombardo. The group remained *in situ* until the dispersion of the Este collection in 1598. The pictures migrated to the Aldobrandini collection in Rome, passed to the Ludovisi household before reaching the Vice-Regal residence in Naples in 1633. In 1637 the *Bacchanal of the Andrians* migrated to Spain where it can still be seen at the Prado Museum.[12] The Camerino paintings were temporarily reunited in 2003 on the occasion of the Titian exhibition organised and hosted in London and Madrid by the National Gallery and the Prado.[13]

The *Bacchanal of the Andrians* and its companion pieces are among of the most scrutinized pictures of Western art. By 2012 the cycle had generated a bibliography spreading over 30 pages.[14] In 1877 Crowe and Cavalcaselle identified the subject and in 1901 Wickhoff identified the literary source, Philostratus' *Imagines*.[15] Scholars have devoted much time and ingenuity to reconstitute the chronology of the commission as well as the original arrangement of the pictures.[16] Monographs provide screenshots of the state of studies, while a plethora of articles have offered new interpretations, uncovered unnoticed sources and identified iconographic details.[17]

Among the books written on the Camerino paintings John Walker's much-quoted monograph of 1956 proposes a straightforward interpretation: The Duke of Ferrara wished a leading painter of the Renaissance to recreate, or reimagine, three vanished masterpieces of classical art—*Bacchus and Ariadne, The Bacchanal of the Andrians* and the *Worship of Venus*, in the spirit of those described by Philostratus in his *Imagines*, evoking a lost ancient gallery of images.[18] Scholars have accepted this view as a starting point to approach the complexity of the paintings. Most

commentators have identified the main theme of the *Bacchanal of the Andrians* in particular, and the Camerino ensemble in general, as expressive of love and desire, or to quote Dana Goodgal, as "… the growing fulfilment of desire for wine and love culminating in the source of desire and the essence of love."[19]

Drunkenness is at the heart of the image. In 1953 Gertrude Smith examined the song sang by the group at the front of the picture: "… who does not drink and drink again does not know what drinking is about…"[20] She attributed its authorship to Adrian Willaert, a Flemish musician active at the court of Ferrara in the 1520s, and suggested that the spiraling canon, a musical loop raising by one tone at each revolution, echoes the rising drunkenness of the dancing Andrians. In 1957 Philipp Fehl, in an insightful essay, set the *Bacchanal of the Andrians* in a mythological genre in which the figures dressed in contemporary costumes are unaware of the deities surrounding them.[21] Everything in the image is otherwise quite uncertain as most figures have received several interpretations. The sleeping man at the back of the image is believed to be a personification of laughter and drunken sleep, but also a river god.[22] As it will become apparent, the naked figure on the right-hand side has been identified as Venus, as a nymph and as a personification of desire and of the effect of wine on women.[23]

In 2010 Anthony Colantuono's 316-page monograph presented the Camerino paintings as a didactic program aiming at the management of male libido. Conceived by the humanist Mario Equicola and addressed to Alfonso I, the cycle would express early modern pseudo-Aristotelian views on the causes of male desire season by season; the *Bacchanal of the Andrians* would embody summer libido.[24] This theory has not convinced all scholars, including for example Philippe Morel and Valeska von Rosen, who interpreted the cycle as an Epicurean discourse on temperance in pleasure reflecting the ideals and ideology of Alfonso d'Este.[25]

In 2012, reviewing the Camerino's historiography, Charles Hope emphasized the originality of the ensemble as devoid of obvious moralizing meaning—thus rejecting modern didactic interpretations—and observed that pre-twentieth-century Titian literature does not allude to or imply the presence of particularly deep or elaborate meaning.[26] Thus the historiography of the Camerino cycle enhances two core aspects of the *Bacchanal of the Andrians*: their amorality and their resistance to systematic interpretations, to 'textualizations.' Indeed, as we can see from

the history of scholarship no one quite agrees on the meaning of the painting and the identity of its actors. It may be that the *Bacchanal of the Andrians* just does not function in terms of meaning, because it represents something that does not really lend itself to verbalization: inebriation and sexual desire, a realm of pulsions often elusive to the lasso of historical enquiry and the grasp of iconological analysis. It is not about images as signs, or as carriers of meaning, but rather lines and colors as carriers of images intended as triggers of desire and arousal. Thus, in order to get closer to the purpose of the painting we could approach it in terms of sensations.

Senses

As well as the *Bacchanal of the Andrians*, the Camerino cycle included Giovanni Bellini's *Feast of the Gods* (Washington, National Gallery), Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* (London, National Gallery), the *Worship of Venus* (Madrid, Prado) and a *Triumph of Bacchus* by Dosso Dossi (Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai). Reconstructions of the original or intended arrangement of the paintings are not unanimous. In fact the images are so rich that rearranging them in any order is somehow bound to generate meaning. The most straightforward sequence, using only the three paintings by Titian would be: encounter (*Bacchus and Ariadne*), desire and sex (*The Bacchanal of the Andrians*), and childbirth (*Worship of Venus*).[27] In the present essay I will focus on the question of sex and desire.

Titian has interpreted rather than illustrated Philostratus' text. A text, in fact, cannot really account for the experience of sensation. Sentences unfold in time while sensation is always multiple and simultaneous. Thus scrutinizing an image is somehow mirroring all the sensations it represents at once. This is what the *Bacchanal of the Andrians* invites their viewer to do, under the headings of loss of balance, music, drinking, drunkenness and exposed female nudity—with all its baggage of tactile, olfactive and gustatory anticipations.

The main theme is drunkenness, as the inclined transparent wine beaker located exactly at the center would suggest (Figure 10.1). The contrast between the horizontal wine and the inclined container appears already in Giovanni Bellini's *Drunkenness of Noah*.[28] Here the beaker's precarious

balance, as it pivots on someone's fingers, contrasts with the horizontality of the wine. The inclined beaker is somehow the axis of the composition of whirling dancing figures. The image seems to express that while wine remains the same it moves and unsettles human minds and bodies. In other words the composition addresses through sight a sense located in the inner ear which did not really have any name in the Renaissance, but was nevertheless active and prone to be disturbed by excessive ingestion of alcohol: the sense of balance.

Titian's treatment has been described as new. It fits rather well, however, within the then-young tradition of Renaissance Bacchanals which depict the progressive effect of wine consumption: conversation, music making, dancing, urinating and collapse. In the early-modern days of epidemics wine was the safest and most consumed beverage. Its consumption was considered beneficial when moderate, but damaging when excessive. The Renaissance concept of moderation, however, considerably differs from ours. As Ficino wrote, you should drink as much as you can so long as you do not get drunk.[29] A century later, in his *Civile Conversatione* the *letterato* Stefano Guazzo described civic drinking as: "bever poco ma spesso" — drink little but often.[30] The benefits and dangers of wine are listed in countless early modern texts.[31] All these sources should alert us to the fact that Renaissance temperance was not abstinence or even modern moderation, but rather the cultivation of an in-between state of gentle inebriation. Furthermore, wine was believed to contain the element of fire and deemed particularly helpful to procreation, a belief embedded in the proverb *Sine Cerere et Baccho friget Venus*.[32] Thus, if the main subject is the effects of wine we may ask whether there is a main character.

Titian's Woman

The two earliest known commentators of the *Bacchanal of the Andrians* might have identified the theme of drunkenness, but their attention did concentrate on the female nude placed on the right-hand side border of the image. Vasari refers to her in his biography of Titian: "… there is a river of red wine around which are singers and musicians, almost drunk, men as much as women, and a naked woman who sleeps, she is so beautiful that she seems alive …"[33] This same sleeping figure grabbed the attention of the agent who drew the Este inventory at the end of the sixteenth century. She

became the main identifying feature of the picture: "… another painting, by the hand of Titian, where is depicted a naked woman, reclining with a baby urinating on her feet…"[34] The urinating child is according to Colantuono an iconographic hybrid of laughter and sleep.[35] Scholars have identified the source of the sleeping nude as the Vatican Ariadne—known at the time as a dying Cleopatra. This statue, a Roman copy of a Hellenistic original, was known from the first decade of the sixteenth century. Acquired by Pope Julius II in 1512, it was one of the most famous antique sculptures known and copied in the Renaissance.[36] Philip Fehl believes that Titian turned her into a nymph, Dana Goodgal identifies a personification of drunken sleep, while Antonio Colantuono discerns the outcome of several layers of texts and meanings. She would be a representation of desire and her posture of apparent sexual abandon an expression of the theme of the effect of wine on female sexuality.[37] To these attributes Colantuono adds a possible allusion to a passage from Nonnus of Panopolis' *Dionysiaca* in which Dionysos pursues a nymph and transforms into wine the river in which she quenches her thirst, thus tricking her into sleep and sexual vulnerability.[38] This mysterious figure could also be a sleeping Venus derived from Giorgione's version, known to Titian and anticipating Lotto's later Venus, here too accompanied by a urinating putto.[39] More recently, and in my view more convincingly, the sleeping figure has been associated with a passage from the *Dialogo di Pittura* of Paolo Pino (1549) advising painters "to include in all their work a figure all mysterious, twisted and difficult, so that through her those who understand the perfection of the art will see that you are a good painter."[40] Variations on this figure are already present in Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499), in Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus* (1510), in Jacopo Caraglio's erotic series of the *Love of the Gods* (*c.* 1527), and even in the woodcuts illustrating Charles Estienne's *De Dissectione partium corporis humani* (Paris 1545).[41]

Such figures, mysterious, anonymous or mythological, have survived in the imagery of desire par excellence: pornography. Even in the softer world of pinups the position remains the same: raising the arms and exposing the armpits. In fact, from the *fortuna critica* of the figure we observe that centuries have increasingly covered her body, from the unpractical and perhaps ticklish twig of Rubens' copy covering her genitalia (Stockholm, National Museum) to the bikinied nymphs of mid-twentieth-century soft porn.

Why should this particular bodily posture be associated with the imagery of sex and desire is as obvious to zoologists as it might seem farfetched to art historians. According to zoologist Michael Stoddard, author of *The Scented Ape*, odors are a privileged means by which the body emits scents destined to arouse potential mating partners. These foyers of scent are particularly active near the genitalia and in the armpits. These are parts normally hidden and their exposure might enhance tactile sensation and trigger further scented emissions.[42] Of course we are not dealing with 'Titian's intentions,' but rather with the skilled articulation of the core male tactile, visual, and olfactive concept of an arousing female figure, thus moving away from a problem in iconology towards one in cultural anthropology.

Renaissance painterly conventions provide further hints of the function of the sleeping figure. Her position, literally on the border of the image, is a compositional device particularly common in medieval and postmedieval European painting. It consists in depicting attributes of the main scene on the border of the image. They are often objects: crown of thorns and nails for scenes of the Lamentation, lilies in the Annunciation, birds, flowers, and fruits emblematic of the Passion in countless scenes of Virgin and Child, musical angels engaging the viewer to tune in at the bottom of religious altarpieces.[43] Thus following these compositional devices the sleeping figure would somehow be the subtitle of the picture.

The sleeping figure has been paired with the collapsed male figure on the upper-right-hand side of the image (Figure 10.1). His open-legged position and muscular body anticipate the Barberini Faun as an icon, if not a type, of male eroticism—a Pathosformel shared with representations of the drunkenness of Noah. The scene of the Andrians dancing and drinking might be a dream shared by these two naked sleepers. But there is more and it is to be found not in mythology but in two topoi of Renaissance art theory: the *Paragone* debate and the legend of the grapes of Zeuxis.

Pictorial Elements

Halfway between philosophical debates and parlor games the *Paragone* is a tale of playful rivalry between painting and sculpture in representing the human figure.[44] Among the various arguments invoked, sculptors asserted that a good sculpture has to be seen from several angles and is therefore

more difficult to achieve than a painting. To this Giorgione is said to have objected that a good painting often shows the same figure in a variety of positions.[45] In this, he was alluding to a painterly practice that Titian seems to have used quite literally, not in rivalry with sculpture, but rather as a channel expressive of erotic thoughts.

In the *Bacchanal of the Andrians* (Figure 10.1), Titian used the same female model at least three, if not four times: the woman seen in lost profile, the woman raising a glass (on the corsage of whom he left his signature), the dancing figure, and the sleeping figure. They have very similar facial features and although they wear less and less clothing they have the same piece of white fabric in common. Thus Titian not only shows the same figure in various positions, but in the same sequence: he undresses her as he twists her body around, gently bringing her from dressed up lucidity to drunken coma.

The sleeping figure appears very much in relief, so much that she seems placed outside the painting, leaning against its surface, as she may have been posing for Titian in his workshop. Relief activates the evocation of touch and in this context, we might think of the ancient anecdote of the rivalry between Zeuxis and Parrhasius. According to Pliny, Zeuxis painted grapes that real birds flew to peck but when Zeuxis asked Parrhasius to pull aside the curtain from his painting, the curtain itself turned out to be a painted illusion. Parrhasius won for he deceived a human while Zeuxis only deceived birds.[46] Titian went further by presenting this sleeping nymph on the edge of the canvas, displaying the ability of painting to achieve relief—another key term of the *Paragone*. Here, however, the depiction of bodily relief is meant to invite the viewer of the painting to behave like the birds in Pliny's tale, or like the hand of Zeuxis—perhaps a second-degree joke, given the phallic meaning attributed to birds in the Renaissance.[47]

A much-quoted document in Titian studies provides further indications on the identity of the figures. This is the letter of Giacomo Tebaldi, Alfonso d'Este's agent, assuring him that Titian is busy with the commission, and that to make his figures he prefers working in Venice rather than Ferrara, since "… here [in Venice] he has easy access to prostitutes and men [who pose] nude to his satisfaction."[48] If the nude figures of the painting allegedly derive from Venetian sex workers, their posture imitates classical sculpture. In one instance, the man leaning on the left-hand-side, Titian has borrowed a figure from Michelangelo's *Battle of Cascina*.[49] In other words, Titian set

himself in dialogue and emulation with the best of ancient and modern art by developing in creative and libidinal modes some of the concepts highlighted by the Renaissance debates on the merits of painting and sculpture: the figure with multiple views, relief and illusion of life. These are the pictorial elements which address the spectator and trigger empathy with the figures. Here empathy is about imagining physically and emotively how these figures feel, not in order to understand in a sympathetic, if not compassionate way, but in order to inflame one's own desire.

Conclusion

Executed in the 1520s, the *Bacchanal of the Andrians* stands out as one of the earliest experiments in the new genre of mythological cycles. Keeping in mind the viewing habits bred by Christian art, what we might call the engagement of the mirror neurons of the viewer and the maker, we must activate the same faculty in ourselves while scrutinizing Renaissance art. Doing so might be one step towards envisaging how artists like Titian, trained in painting countless Crucifixions and Madonnas, must have felt when transferring their skills of empathic visualization to secular themes enacted by sex workers posing as ancient sculptures.

By producing secular images, in which the bodily aspect of the figures was central and the narrative a mere pretext, Titian contributed to set some of the foundation of Western pornography, a genre which made its first steps in the same decade as the *Bacchanal of the Andrians* with *I Modi* (1524) and the *Loves of the Gods* (1527) thanks to some of Raphael's most gifted collaborators: Giulio Romano, Jacopo Caraglio and Marcantonio Raimondi.

This aspect has occasioned controversies in the field of Titian studies. Rona Goffen in particular has contested the approach of scholars who characterize Titian's female nudes as mere pin-ups, without regard to their cultural and more specifically to their marital context.[50] Nevertheless the mysterious and anonymous sleeping figure of the *Bacchanal of the Andrians* would suggest here that to please the Duke of Este, Titian addressed that same aspect of the male psyche awakened and taunted by pornography: sexual appetite. In other words, the attitude implicit in Professor Goffen's characterization of a certain strand of scholarship would

in turn be a reenactment in the scholarly field of the same male stance addressed by the painter.

Figure 10.2 Marcel Duchamp, *Étant donnés*, 1946–66, mixed media assemblage, 242.6 × 177.8 × 124.5 cm. Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Accession No. 1969-41-1.

© The Estate of Marcel Duchamp / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2016.

Modern Western pornography has been defined as "a gender-specific genre produced primarily by and for men but focused obsessively on the female figure."[51] This characterization could apply to the sleeper of the *Bacchanal of the Andrians* as well as to Titian's many variations on the reclining nude which have survived in some of the standard poses of Western pornography.[52]

Early modern masculine desire, implicitly addressed by this imagery, can be found at work in micro-history studies such as Guido Ruggiero's *Sex and Crime in Venice*, which follows the judiciary handling of sex crimes from

the fourteenth to the fifteenth century. Ruggiero's findings highlight lenient attitudes towards sexual violence to women—so-called rapists would routinely be absolved if they agreed to marry their victim. To quote his synthetic observation: "… from rape to fornication to marriage appears to have been a relatively common progression."[53] The sleeping figure of the *Bacchanal of the Andrians* fits rather neatly this universe of male active appetite and female passivity characteristic of the Renaissance view of women.

Early modern male dominance has led twentieth-century feminist critics to diagnose the Renaissance as more a time of expansion for men than for women. From the late middle ages onwards women's financial condition worsened, their access to education decreased and, more importantly and to the point here, ideas and conventions of love changed. The shift from medieval courtly love to Platonic love characteristic of the Renaissance can be described as a transition from ludic power play to idealization. While in courtly love women and men were interacting, in Renaissance Platonic love women are passive objects of male active idealization and generative of contemplation and delight expressive of divine beauty. Of course Plato's concept of beauty bloomed into philosophical mysticism in high culture, but in Renaissance vernacular culture it became merely a way of idealizing and objectifying women. Blended with Petrarchism, Platonic ideas on love eventually shaped the male fantasy of a female ideal which, in turn, the visual arts represented with their sensuous resources.[54]

Thus we can come back to the hypothesis that by setting some of the foundations of Western pornography Renaissance artists like Titian inaugurated a long and fruitful period of male solitary fantasizing of the female body mediated by the bodily revival of ancient art. Across history the transformation occurred in the way images position the viewer. To highlight this phenomenon we can confront the mysterious sleeper of Titian's *Bacchanal of the Andrians* to the main figure of Marcel Duchamp's last work, *Etant Donnés* (Figure 10.2).[55] Both nudes share many features but what primarily distinguishes them is the stance of the expected viewer: in Titian the painted nude is literally invading our tactile space but in Duchamp's version the tri-dimensional image can only be perceived through a small keyhole, thus forcing the viewer into solitary peeping.

Notes

1 Philostratus (1931, I, 25).
2 Foucault (1976).
3 See for example Ruggiero (1985, 4; 9).
4 Baxandall (1971,130–1).
5 See Alberti (1960, II, 36; 62).
6 On the *Paragone,* see texts in Barocchi (1971–7, vol. 2), Fallay d'Este and Bauer (1992) and Hendler (2013). The most complete bibliography is in Farago (1991, 428–51).
7 Quiviger (2010, 47–51).
8 On the concept of empathy in the late nineteenth century, see Pinotti (1997).
9 See Bråten (2007, 6–7).
10 For a good summary, see Kirkland-Ives (2014).
11 See Gilio (1986, 1). Also available from http://www.memofonte.it.
12 Vicentini and Cappelletti (2012, 274).
13 Jaffé (2003).
14 Hope (2012b, 319–49).
15 Crowe and Cavalcaselle (1881, I, 226) and Wickhoff (1902).
16 Borella and Hope (2006) and Hope (1971a).
17 See in particular Cavalli-Björkman (1987b).
18 Walker (1956, 42).
19 Goodgal (1978, 180). See also Goffen (1997b, 120–1).
20 Smith (1953, 54): "… qui ne boit et ne reboit il ne sais que boire soit …"
21 Fehl (1957, 165).
22 Murutes (1973).
23 See below, section on "Titian's Woman."
24 Colantuono (2010).
25 Morel (2010), now expanded in Morel (2014, 288–94). See also Rosen (2007).
26 Hope (2012a, 75).
27 Already proposed by Brown (1987), but differing from Hope (1971) and Goodgal (1978).
28 *C.* 1500, Besançon, Musée des Beaux-Arts. See: Goffen (1989, 249–52; Figure 180), Bätschmann (2008, 212–13; Figure 184) and Tempestini (2012) and Zanchi (2010).
29 Ficino (1989, 221).
30 Guazzo (1588, fol. 273r).
31 See for example Lando (2000, 137): "… il vino giovare a' nervi, risanare gli occhi, … revocare l'appetito a' svogliati, donare alegrezza a' contristati, scacciare il freddo da' corpi, provocare l'urina, rafrenare il vomito, conciliar il sonno, e fare che le crudità quasi repentinamente si cuochino …"
32 The presence of fire in wine is a commonplace; see for example Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 7, 6, 18. The proverb *sine Cerere et Baccho friget Venus* (without Bacchus and Ceres—i.e. wine and food—Venus becomes cold) comes from Terentius, *Eunuch*, Act IV, scene 1, 1, line 5. On this topic, see Morel (2014, 51–58; 204).
33 Vasari (1966–87, vol. 6, 158): "… è un fiume di vino vermiglio, a cui sono intorno cantori e sonatori quasi ebri, e così femine come maschi, et una donna nuda che dorme, tanto bella che pare viva …"
34 Venturi (1882, 113, doc. 1), quoted by Hope (1971, 641): "… contiguo a detta pittura un'altra di mano del detto Tiziano dove era dipinta una donna nuda, che giaceva con un bambino, che gli pisciava su i piedi …"
35 Colantuono (2010, 121).
36 Bober *et al.* (2010, 125–6).
37 Fehl (1987, 122), Goodgal (1978, 179, note 14) and Colantuono (2010, 104).
38 Colantuono (2010, 118).

39 Cavalli-Björkman (1987a, 97–9).
40 Pino (1960, vol. 1, 115): "… e in tutte l'opere vostre fateli intervenire almeno una figura tutta sforciata, misteriosa e difficile, acciò che per quella voi siate notato valente da chi intenda la perfezione dell'arte." Text available at http://www.memofonte.it. Already pointed out by Rosen (2007, 330).
41 Illustrated and discussed in Talvacchia (1999, 177).
42 Stoddart (1990, 62–7).
43 Quiviger (2010, 137).
44 Cf. above, note 6.
45 Vasari (1966–87, vol. 4, 46).
46 Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 35.9–36.2.
47 On birds as erotic double entendre, see Ruggiero (2010, 1–2).
48 Campori (1874, 593–4): "… qui hà comoditate de putane, et d'homo, che nudo le satisfa…"
49 See Goffen (1997b, 122).
50 See especially Goffen (1997a).
51 See Gubar (1987, 713).
52 Hope (1980, 124).
53 Ruggiero (1985, 33).
54 See Kelly-Gadol (1987, 192).
55 http://www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/65633.html#.

11 Pollution and Desire in Hans Baldung Grien

The Abject, Erotic Spell of the *Witch and Dragon*

Yvonne Owens

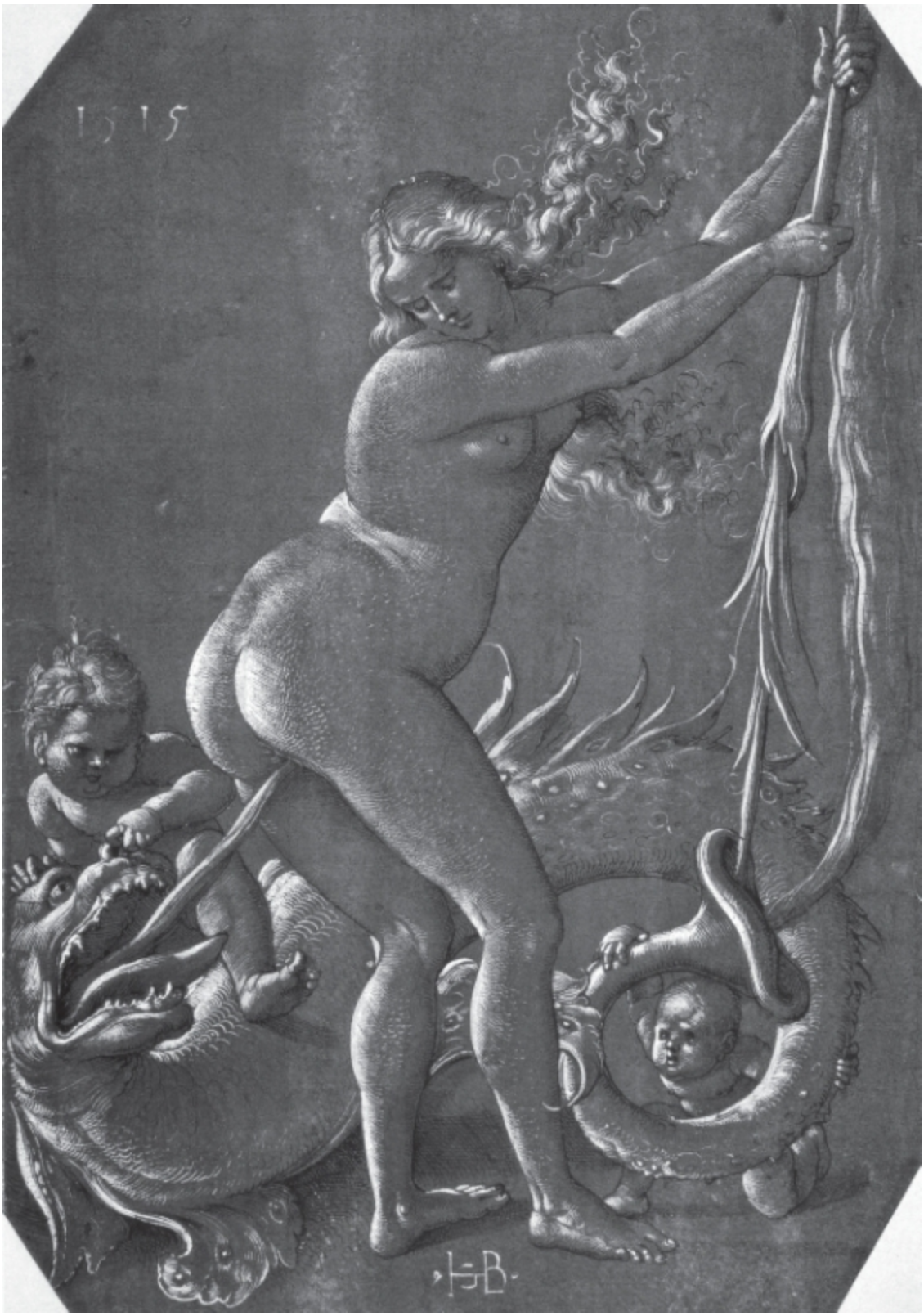

Figure 11.1 Hans Baldung Grien, *Witch and Dragon*, 1515, pen and ink with white highlights on brown, prepared paper, 29.5 × 20.7 cm. Karlsruhe,

Staatliche Kunsthalle, Kupferstichkabinett, VIII.1061-1.

Introduction

In 2007, the Städel Museum presented "Witches' Lust and the Fall of Man: the Strange Fantasies of Hans Baldung Grien." Curated and documented by Bodo Brinkmann, the show exhibited Baldung's 'Witch's Sabbath' works alongside his 'Fall of Man' themed images.[1] This juxtaposition gave an overwhelming impression of the threatening allure with which Baldung imbued his graphic, nude representations of the dangerous, eroticized, feminine body. For the sixteenth-century Northern humanists who were the primary clients and collectors for these works, it seems that erotica just wasn't sexy without the implicit, deeply affective threat of imminent physical and moral danger. Positing the womb as a kind of "Pandora's Box,"[2] classical and medieval antifeminist tropes fed into a coherent, elite discourse of the seductions and pollutions of witchcraft being firmly rooted in phlegmatic, feminine physiology. One image among Baldung's idiosyncratic oeuvre stands out, however, as embodying a stunning range of discourses, emblems and tropes informing Renaissance ideas around toxic, feminine physiology and Woman's 'natural' ability to inflict her fatal 'witchcraft' through sex. The youthful woman of a highlighted pen and ink drawing created in 1515, most often recognized by the title of the *Witch and Dragon* (Figure 11.1), presents a comprehensive 'buffet' of sixteenth-century medical and theological figures informing the idea of the dangerous, female, sexual ingénue. Just setting out on her nefarious career as seductive enchantress and horrific nemesis, the adolescent 'witch' in this image represents the quintessential siren, irresistibly calling men's virtue to its demise.

Albrecht Dürer, his apprentice and close friend Hans Baldung Grien,[3] and contemporaries such as Urs Graf and the Swiss artist Niklaus Manuel Deutsch helped to establish the stylizations and iconography of eroticized witches in art (Figures 11.2 and 11.3); the genre they collectively created stressed the witches' identification with issues of sexuality and bodily extremes. In the essay that follows, I discuss how this deeply affective figure was parleyed to great erotic effect in Baldung's oeuvre, particularly as mediated through his *Witch and Dragon* image. I begin this discussion with a description of the picture and its main themes. I then address the

topics of the artist's milieu and the ardent, humanist, classical reception operative in Strasbourg during the artist's time there, speaking to the cultural and intellectual terrain of the Witch Hunt and its mediated imagery in art and literature. I describe some of the Aristotelian theories underlying the constructed, humoral pathology of menstruation informing the essentially gynecological construction of feminine-gendered *maleficia*. I also examine prevalent, gynecologically informed discourses on women, representing women as inherently prone to witchcraft, in two main documents consulted by witch hunters and theologians in Baldung's day, the *Secretis Mulierum* and the *Malleus Maleficarum*, and speculate on the omnipresence of these texts in the Baldung clan's professional milieu of jurists and physicians.

Figure 11.2 Urs Graf, *Fortuna, c.* 1520, pen and ink on paper, 17.7 × 15.7 cm. Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Graphische Sammlung, HZ 160.

My findings discover the means by which Baldung deployed radically polarized images of desirability and abjection as an affective visual strategy in his witchcraft images. As historically applied to dramatic, polemical advantage by early Church Fathers like Rufinus, Jerome or Augustine, the tactic depended upon a deployment of dialectically opposed images—icons of spiritual purity set against depictions of feminine pollution—to intensify

the oppositions between the gross or physical aspects of Christ's birth and his divinely masculine nature.[4] Unlike these writers' modeling of inversion, however, Baldung unfolds his emblematic visual parables to position Woman/Witch as the inescapable sexual 'flaw' by which the incautious, unknowingly fallen, helplessly victimized, mortal man is compromised, ensnared, and brought low. Intimately engaging imagery and attractive, pornographic display are set against icons of monstrous acts and 'polluted,' feminine genital emissions. Like the fascination with witches itself, Baldung's success depended upon an exacting equilibrium among the iconographic elements driving his moralizing, titillating fabliaux, one that balanced attraction against fear, revulsion against desire, charged eroticism against abject horror. I propose that the artist ensured this delicate equilibrium by weighing the witch subject's beauty and physical allure against evocations of the 'monstrous' signifier of menstruation, familiar to his elite audience, and particular milieu, through elite discourses on femininity and witchcraft.

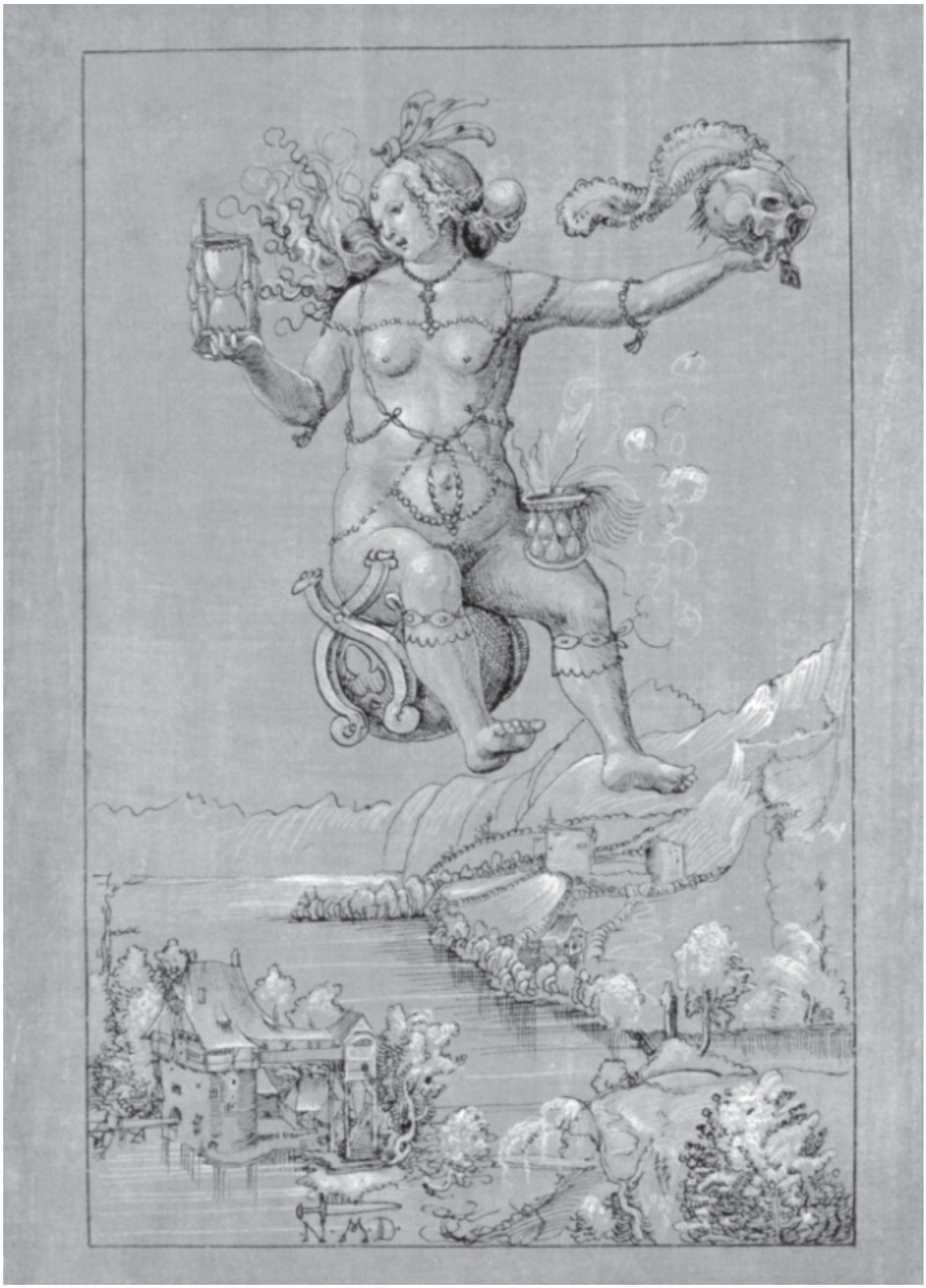

Figure 11.3 Niklaus Manuel Deutsch, *Airborne Witch Carrying Skull of the Artist, c.* 1513, pen and ink with white highlights on brown/orange

prepared ground, 30.9 × 20.9 cm. Basel, Kunstmuseum, Kupferstichkabinett, U.X.6.

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With this study I also hope to contribute to the discussion on Baldung's eroticized witches by exploring related, folkloric 'poison maiden' and basilisk themes. I see these as having been self-consciously embedded in the 'mortifying' iconography of the *Witch and Dragon* as contemporaneously recognizable insignia of corporeal and spiritual corruption. My reading of the visual text along these lines offers a new interpretation of Baldung's 'dragon' creature in the *Witch and Dragon* as actually configured to represent a basilisk. Among other influential sources on feminine corruption, Baldung's contemporary, the famed physician and natural philosopher Paracelsus, wrote of the basilisk's birth from the putrefaction of 'female impurity,' or menstruation, and also linked the monster's killing gaze with that of Woman's. My reading of the serpentine figuration of Baldung's drawing as a basilisk lends the picture additional eschatological overtones, as the basilisk was conventionally linked with death, sin, pollution, the Apocalypse and Antichrist.

A Monstrously Inverted Eroticism

What do we actually see when viewing the *Witch and Dragon*, and what cultural and epistemological conditions enabled its educated, 'safe' reading by its select, erudite audience? The individual elements of the *Witch and Dragon* are shocking and not easily comprehended. Combined into the total picture, they coalesce into an utterly mystifying tableau of sexual mischief. Just what this mischief consists of is left relatively unexplained to modern sensibilities, for there is little about this picture that is obvious to the contemporary viewer. To the contemporaneous collector of such works, however, we must assume that the iconic elements were transparent and easily accessed, and that, incorporated into the picture's combined, textual message, they formed a coherent whole. This intricate, complex range of correspondences and signifiers is what likely supplied the greatest pleasure to the audience for Baldung's witch images, perhaps even surpassing their erotic value or their elite exclusivity. Item by item, then, of what species of iconography does this particularly abject, erotic image consist?

There is, central to the composition, a beautiful, nude, very young woman. She is pictured bending over slightly, presenting her back and her full, shapely buttocks, while looking over her shoulder in the direction of the viewer. We can see her face, thereby, and her gestural pose is contorted in such a way as to reveal the finely detailed labia of the sexual orifice nestled between the lobes of her derriere. The small of her back is bunched and muscular, more crudely cross-hatched than the other figurative contours, giving a bestial impression. She arches her back and extends her buttocks in the direction of the gaping maw of the dragon that crouches on the ground behind her. Like the dragon, she also contorts her body in a slight crouch, enabling the release of an unidentifiable vaginal emission in a steady stream into the dragon's mouth from between the exquisitely rendered vulva lips (*schamlippen*).

The young woman's delicate facial features are, like her vulva, very finely rendered. So is her long, curly hair, the locks of which coil skyward as if electrified. An invisible force, like a static wind, appears to lift the tendrils of hair, just as it levitates the unidentifiable smoke or vapor emanating from the weird, cervical opening at the end of the reptile's tail. Baldung awards coiling, serpentine tresses to most of his female subjects, even to female saints, but the hair of this witch seems especially unmanageable. As if possessed of a self-willed, threatening *animus* like the monstrous serpents of the Medusa's pate, it roams off in all directions, independent of wind or motion, obeying some inner, iniquitous promptings. The hands and fingers are exquisitely detailed, with highlighting showing off their sensual contours. The limbs, curves, and rounded forms of the adolescent witch's body are all finely highlighted in white ink with extremely sensitive cross-hatching, as are the twisting coils of the dragon, his fins, frills, and the strange orifice at the terminus of his tail. The creature appears both phallic and uterine in conformation. Both bulbous and tubular, its ambiguous relationship to the woman's uterine efflux is also ambivalently communicated in the drawing. 'He' is not actually identifiable as masculine, but seems more androgynous or hermaphroditic—an abominable, liminal beast.

Two *putti* disport themselves in the lower half of the composition, one—looking like a toddler of one or two years—straddling the dragon's serpentine form just behind its head, while teasing it, and forcing the reptilian mouth open, by sticking two pudgy fingers inside its nose. The

other—appearing as an infant of several months of age—supports the *ouroboros* formed by the curl of the creature's tail between two chubby hands while kneeling on the ground. The young woman/witch wields a sort of leafy, vegetal wand, inserting its long shaft between the large, detailed labia of the strange, aforementioned orifice located at the nether tip of the dragon's tail. The cervix-like, gaping orifices at both ends sport carefully rendered 'lips.' The rear aperture emits a stream more obviously igneous, vaporous or gaseous than that issuing from between the witch's legs. It rises skyward like the witch's animated hair, creating a kind of polluted, elemental symmetry.

On a blood-like, reddish-brown ground, with mysterious streams and smokes descending and ascending, Baldung's *Witch and Dragon* appears to speak directly to prevailing tropes surrounding menstruation, the monstrous conceptions and elemental disordering constructed as resulting from ungoverned, feminine *maleficium*. The adolescent girl of Baldung's imagining is perhaps a young witch just starting out, undergoing menarche ('The Curse of Eve') and its attendant, mortifying contract with the 'evil spirit.' The two obscenely contorted bodies are locked in a symbiotic circuit, the overall impression being one of 'hot,' charged, vertiginous interactions of an unspecified, but definitely impure, nature. It has been conjectured that the form linking the creature's mouth and the witch's sex denotes the dragon's tongue,[5] or that the fiery stream actually originates in the dragon's maw and is being directed into the witch's sex as a form of demonic sexual congress.[6] This reading of the streaming form seems unfounded as the creature's tongue is clearly visible beneath it, and the directional flow of the stream would seem to originate with the witch, as it is narrower at the point of bodily exit and widens as it descends into the dragon's maw. It would even be more convincing to read the streaming form as umbilical cord tissue, implying that a newborn infant had been 'sacrificed' to the demonic reptile. The idea that the stream simply represents feminine blood, however, combines more readily available, abject signifiers for the Early Modern imagination than these other contestants.

Provenance and Historiography of the *Witch and Dragon*

The provenance of this iconic work is uncertain. The Karlsruhe Kupferstichkabinett, in which it is held, ranks as one of the oldest ongoing collections of works on paper still in existence anywhere in Europe.[7] The cornerstone of the collection (which now spans some 100,000 sheets) was successively laid by the margraves and later grand dukes of Baden, including drawings and prints by German masters of the late medieval and early Renaissance periods, especially those active in the Upper Rhine. Foremost among these masters were Martin Schongauer, Albrecht Dürer, Matthias Grünewald and Hans Baldung Grien. The collection actually began with some of Baldung's earliest works, he having been patronized early in his career by the dynasty of the Margraves of Baden-Durlach in Basle, with Christopher I as one of Baldung's most loyal patrons.[8] He commissioned the young Baldung to paint the *Markgrafentafel*, or 'margrave panel' sometime between 1509 and 1512.[9] One of the great-grandsons of Christopher I, Margrave Frederick V of Baden-Durlach (1594–1659), an avid collector of prints and drawings, is known to have acquired a sketchbook of Hans Baldung, and a large collection of drawings, during a trip to Strasbourg.[10] Although there is no date for this, nor any precise record as proof, it is very probable that the *Witch and Dragon* came into the collection at this point. If so, it is possible that the piece resided in the so-called 'Nudities Room' of the *Kunstkammer*, a cabinet of art and curiosities, at the court of the Margraves of Baden-Durlach. An elite, luxury cabinet collection would have been the natural home for such a work. The contents of cabinet collections typically consisted of small or miniature, erotically charged, precious works of art for private viewing and discussion.[11] Two works by Baldung are known to have been a part of the margraves' *Kunstkammer* prior to 1688, although these were described as bath scenes.[12]

Joseph Leo Koerner credited Baldung with intensifying the "radical otherness" of the witch as subject.[13] His portrayals of witches were unique in their explicit eroticism and repulsiveness. This shocking difference has precluded much in the way of critique, exhibition and reproduction in surveys of Baldung's works. Witchcraft historian William E. Burns interpreted the *Witch and Dragon* iconography as "explicitly pornographic and meant for private circulation among Baldung's friends," in that the image "features a dragon directing a stream of fire from its mouth between a witch's legs."[14] Apart from the questions surrounding this interpretation of

the image as depicting the stream as one of fire, originating in the maw of the dragon (an idea to which we will return in more depth), a reading of the iconography as merely pornographic seems simplistic. Intended for private viewing, to be shared only among an educated and select few, such prestigious 'cabinet works' required a portion of mortification to facilitate 'safe viewing' for its elite audience. In keeping with medieval models of pious polemics, an element of fearful, condemning abjection enabled a sort of 'prophylactic' reception of moralizing erotica by the high-ranking clergy, theologians, physicians, jurists, and reformers of Baldung's professional and social *milieu*. It would seem the image was meant to edify in its titillation, availing its viewer of multivalent, moral readings as well as an intellectual/pornographic connoisseurship.

Though modern art historical studies of Baldung were launched by Oscar Eisenmann in the 1870s,[15] the *Witch and Dragon* was not addressed in his analyses, nor in most of the Baldung studies to follow.[16] As recently as 1961 a comprehensive survey of Baldung's witchcraft images, published by Gustav Hartlaub in the famous *Reclam* monograph series, omitted this one picture "for reasons of propriety," while acknowledging it as "one of the master's artistically most important studies."[17] Carl Koch's landmark studies deciphered the artist's style and its development through Baldung's oeuvre, also taking into account the problems of reception surrounding the *Witch and Dragon*, where he includes the possibility that the stream represents (or is meant to suggest) urine or menstrual blood.[18] In 1983, Sigrid Schade analyzed Baldung's witchcraft images as contributing to the transformation of traditional notions of magic and witchcraft by locating the source of *maleficium* in the eroticism of the female body, typing women as naturally prone to diabolical heresy, and examined contemporaneous characterizations of the feminine body as a sort of attractive but deadly 'Pandora's Box.'[19] Joseph Leo Koerner followed with an article on the motif of death in Baldung's oeuvre,[20] and an incisive study of Baldung's radical 'otherizing' of the witch icon as part of his book on the advent of self-portraiture in German art, treating the *Witch and Dragon* in this context, speculating on the identity and directional flow of the stream as intentionally ambivalent, and on the suggestion that the dragon figure serves to signify not only a phallus, but also the womb.[21] Linda Hults has written extensively on Baldung's suite of witch images produced in Freiburg im Breisgau in light of his mediations of feminine, sexual evil,

including this piece.[22] Earlier, Hults had theorized that the connecting, streaming form signified the dragon's tongue, inserted into the witch's vulva for purposes of sexual stimulation.[23] In 1997, Katherina Siefert discussed the idea that the stream represents a jet of fire originating with the dragon and vaginally penetrating the young witch, signifying coitus with the devil.[24] She ultimately rejects this solution in favor of her own theory that the witch is in the superior, sexually aggressive role, dominating and subjugating the dragon with the fire emanating from her vulva, in this manner increasing her powers as a witch.[25]

In 2007, Bodo Brinkmann, curator of the 2007 Frankfurt exhibition of Baldung's witchcraft- and Fall-of-Man-themed works at the Städel Museum, published his catalog essays for the show, singling out the *Witch and Dragon* as ". . . by far the most radical drawing Baldung devoted to the subject of witches."[26] He sticks to the interpretation of the animal as dragon, however, and briefly reviews older interpretations of the 'stream.' Ultimately, he avoids taking a stance on the identity or origin of this streaming form, and skips considerations of the sexual, pornographic and misogynic impact of the image in favor of a rather abstruse paragraph on Baldung's dependence on gothic manuscript border illustrations in his formal composition. More recently, Erwin Pokorny wrote specifically on the *Witch and Dragon*, finding no compelling evidence that the exhibitionistic figure represents a witch at all, or any connotations suggesting the commission of sexual evil, but is instead merely meant to signify a seductive sea nymph toying with a sea monster.[27]

The Cultural Context for Baldung's Witchcraft Works

Joseph Koerner described how a cogent, contemporaneous viewership for Baldung's imagery would:

> . . . demand not only that the viewer grasp the image's complex theological implications, but also that he recognise the dense fabric of allusions to other works by Baldung and by Dürer—a situation best imagined for an intimate circle of educated, self-consciously sophisticated, and visually literate men in contact with patrician and aristocratic collectors and personally acquainted with the artist himself.[28]

Though we cannot know what private thoughts, opinions or beliefs Baldung may have held upon the nature of feminine physicality, the nature of evil,

the Fall, or the heresy of witchcraft, we can know, with some confidence, what thoughts, opinions and beliefs he construed his clients, patrons and collectors to have held regarding such matters. In considering his patrons' interests and beliefs, he seems not to have been wrong. The witchcraft works were popular, and his highly successful inaugural print as an independent master, the *Witch's Sabbath* chiaroscuro woodcut of 1510 (Figure 11.4), served as his shop's flagship.[29] Baldung employed this densely formatted, erudite iconography of witches to establish his reputation, both as a debuting artist and as a learned humanist, and to visually discourse on such weighty, fashionable topics as witchcraft, women, feminine sexuality, the moral status of the feminine body, and the nature of worldly evil. We can infer at least a few clerical clients for these pieces, and there is evidence that the Freiberg drawings circulated among artists treating related themes, as copies and references to the works in cabinet collections and personal letters attest.[30]

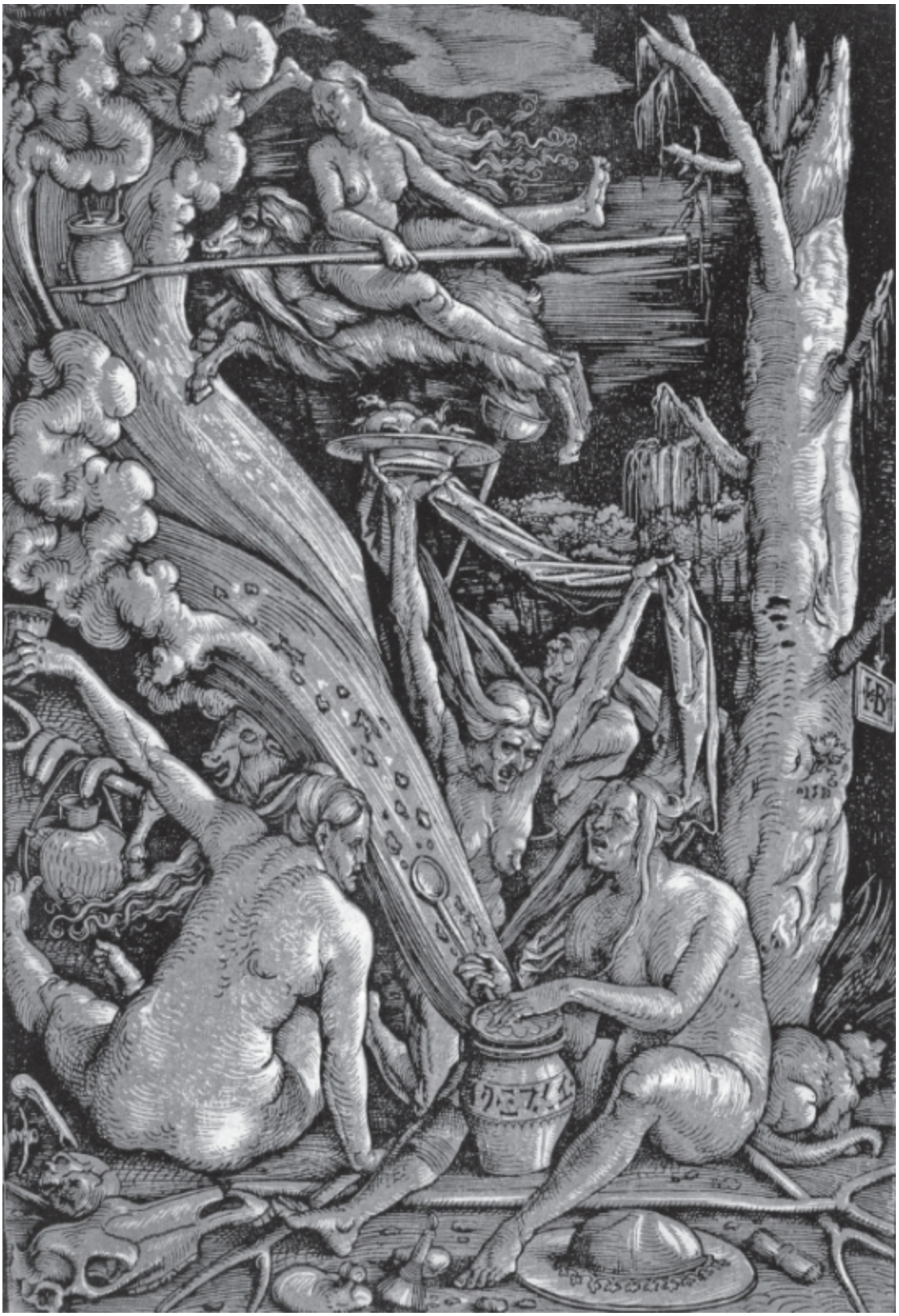

Figure 11.4 Hans Baldung Grien, *Witches' Sabbath*, 1510, chiaroscuro woodcut with tone block in brown, 37.9 × 26 cm. Gotha, Museum Schloss

Friedenstein, 43.67.

The only male member of his well-connected family without a university education, Hans was born in late 1484 or early 1485. His birthplace was likely Schwäbisch Gmünd in Southwest Germany, judging from town records.[31] The family appears to have settled in Alsace by 1492, where the senior Baldung, Johann, was an attorney (*Prokurator*) in the service of the Bishop of Strasbourg when Hans was growing up.[32] Johann's brother, Hans' uncle Hieronymus, moved to Strasbourg in 1496, eventually being appointed as honorary physician to Emperor Maximilian I.[33] By 1503, Baldung was in Nuremberg and professionally associated with Dürer as an apprentice; this arrangement would have allowed the young, unmarried man a position in the master's household.[34] Like Willibald Pirckheimer, Dürer's intimate friend and mentor,[35] Baldung had illustrious natal connections, and Dürer likely elevated himself socially and professionally by the association.[36] The young artist emerged as the master's most famous and successful protégé when he was selected as one of the artists to decorate Maximilian's Prayer Book.[37] Baldung had returned to Strasbourg by 1509 and created his 'flagship' image as an independent master, the *Witches' Sabbath* (1510), utilising the prestigious chiaroscuro woodblock print technique, which was associated with imperial patronage and spoke to an elite audience (Figure 11.4).[38] His debuting self-marketing strategy appears to have worked: it was in the wake of this inaugural woodblock edition that Baldung was engaged to create the famous altarpiece for the Freiburg Münster, which he finished in 1516 (still in situ), a tremendously prestigious commission that cemented his reputation and made his fortune. Baldung's independent art production spanned the years 1510 through 1544, with the professional sojourn in Freiburg im Breisgau from 1512 until 1517.[39] It was during his time in Freiburg, while working on the cathedral's high altar, that his most iconic witchcraft figures were created, circulated and copied, ultimately destined for various, prestigious cabinet collections, including the *Witch and Dragon*.[40]

The Baldung clan's professional rank necessitated a familial closeness to the disciplinary discourses of medicine, law and the theology of the Witch Hunt. Hans' generation of Baldungs included prominent jurists and Episcopal appointees; he had intimate, familial links to the professional milieu of university-trained lay magistrates that constituted the core of the

Witch Hunt.[41] Baldung's father was a jurist and scholar in the employ of the Bishop of Strasbourg from 1492 through 1505, during which time the bishop was personally charged with the commission of the Witch Hunt, with the *Malleus Maleficarum* as its official instrument.[42] The junior Baldung almost certainly had first-hand experience with inquisitorial legal process, and is likely to have been familiar with the role of the *Malleus Maleficarum* in the matter, as it had become the authoritative guide for prosecuting the Witch Hunt in German lands and beyond, during Johann Baldung's tenure as a lawyer for the bishopric.[43]

Given the occupational disciplines of the Baldung family's particular social and professional *milieu*, the witch hunter's handbook, with its peculiarly medical construction of witches, might have been difficult to avoid. Between its first printing in 1486 and 1500, the *Malleus Maleficarum* had been reprinted eight times, with thirteen editions by 1520.[44] Wolfgang Behringer has pointed out that, although no new edition of the book was published between 1520 and 1580, it remained the authoritative work and was present in regional libraries.[45] The author of the witch hunters' handbook, the Dominican monk Heinrich Kramer, made the womb culpable for the most serious heretical crimes.[46] His text provides ample justification for an abject focus upon the female genital 'vessel' as the font of witchcraft, such as that purveyed by Baldung:

> Everything is governed by carnal lusting, which is insatiable in them (next to the last chapter of Proverbs: There are three insatiable things . . . and a fourth that never says, 'It is enough,' namely the opening of the womb) and for this reason they even cavort with demons to satisfy their lust. . . . Hence, and consequently, it should be called the Heresy not of Sorcerers but of Sorceresses, to name it after the predominant element.[47]

Dürer was very likely aware of the *Malleus Maleficarum* quite early on, and may even have owned one, as his godfather, the prominent Nuremberg publisher Anton Koberger, had issued multiple editions of the tome in the 1490s.[48] Although, compared to the more rural theaters of witchcraft persecution, Strasbourg was lenient, there remained a serious persecution of witches during Baldung's tenure in the area.[49] Between 1515 and 1535 alone, the Strasbourg archives record five thousand witches having been burned in the diocese.[50] Citing Christian duty in the face of the dire threat posed Christendom and Germany due to witches' activities, a sodality of prominent Strasbourg's humanists, consisting of the famous Martin Bucer, Wolfgang Capito and Caspar Hedio, signed a petition in 1538 urging that

witches be hunted, tried and executed with alacrity.[51] It may be assumed that this elite corps wielded considerable influence. The worldview of the urbane class of humanists to which Baldung belonged existed within the ubiquitous cognitive culture of the Witch Hunt. Even if this were not so, the likelihood that Baldung would have been exposed to the ideas, laws, theories and theses on witchcraft from an early age, works such as the *Malleus Maleficarum*, cannot be denied. If nothing else, for a budding artist, the *Malleus* would have provided a rich source of imagistic themes.

Strasbourg's intellectual milieu included the humanists Jakob Wimpfeling, Sebastian Brant, Thomas Vogler, Beatus Rhenanus and the Italian-educated Thomas Wolf. Jakob Wimpfeling and Sebastian Brant founded a *sodalitas litteraria* in Strasbourg within the first decade of the sixteenth century, with a humanistic agenda to plan new editions of classical authors to be published by the many Strasbourg presses. The group was modeled on those of the renowned German nationalistic humanist Conrad Celtis, operating under the same name in Nuremberg and Vienna. They met regularly to read classical works, present their own poetry, or discuss the new editions of ancient authors being brought out the Strasbourg presses.[52] Baldung created illustrations and title pages for editions of Pliny, Lucian and Celtis, among other famed authors. Sebastian Brant edited the text for the edition of Virgil put out by Strasbourg's well-known Grüninger Press.'[53] For this project, Grüninger employed Hans Baldung Grien, Hans Leonhard Schaufelein and Urs Graf as illustrators, among a few others.[54] The prestige of the group benefited from the presence of Hieronymus Gebweiler, the director of the cathedral school, and Johann Geiler von Kaysersberg, then a popular preacher for the cathedral, where he had his own custom-built pulpit and attracted large, enthusiastic audiences. Margaret Sullivan has conjectured that Baldung's witch images may have served to inspire the popular preacher's sermons on witchcraft.[55] We know that Geiler's sermons contributed directly to Baldung's iconography of witchcraft in at least one instance. A woodcut illustrating Geiler's sermon on the delusional, vertiginous witch, rocking on her milking stool while thinking herself transported by magical flight to a witches' Sabbath, was created by Baldung (or his shop) for a posthumous collection of Geiler's homilies, *Die emeis* (The Ants), in or before 1516 (Figure 11.5).[56] Concealing his classical, scholastic erudition beneath a deceptively popular narrative style, Geiler sourced his vision of witchcraft primarily in Johannes

Nider's *Formicarius* and *Preceptorium divine legis*, and Jean Gerson's treatises on the defectiveness and calumny of women's visionary experience.[57]

Most of Strasbourg's literary humanists were educated clerics,[58] which would necessarily have colored their reception of witchcraft imagery. In fact, it is this particular demographic that is the one most likely to have readily accessed Baldung's seemingly idiosyncratic iconography. The nonspecific effluents exiting the mouths of cats, vessels and vaginas in Baldung's witchcraft images might have mystified the 'uninitiated,' in terms of classical humanist or scholastic learning, but they would have been discovered to extrapolate upon an encyclopaedic array of learned tropes by those privy to their cognitive/cultural contexts. Baldung's sense of the satirically scatological constructions of witchcraft figures and the role of the so-called 'menstrual excrement'[59] in these constructs is apparent in his use of a particular gesture of the lower limbs and torso for the witch who lights a torch from the polluted fire of her vaginal efflux in the *Witch's Sabbath* of 1514 (Figure 11.6), similar to that of the *Defecating Woman* life study that preceded it in 1513 (Figure 11.7).[60] His depictions of witchcraft represented a set of signifiers with which his audience might be assumed to have been well familiar, given their cultural and professional milieus. The exciting, emblematic, obscene world of witches that Baldung shared with his prestigious audience was one where grotesquely comical (if greatly deplorable) inversions of the paradigmatic masculine norm held sway, best signified by the 'pollution' of menstruation as a sign of cultural preposterousness.

Am mitwoch nach Reminiscere
Von den Unholden oder von den Hexen.

DEr erſten ſpri
ch ich/das ſie hin vñ her
faren vnd bleibē doch an
einer ſtat. Aber ſie wenen
ſie faren/ wan der teuffel
kan inen ein ſplendor alſo in kopff machē
vnd alſo ein fantaſei/dz ſie nit anders we-
nen dan ſie faren allenthalben/vnd wenē
ſie geen bei einander/vnd bei andern fra-
wen vnd tantzen vnd ſpringen vnd eſſen
Dā das kan er aller meſt dennen thūn/
die da mit im zeſchaffen hond/ im verpfli
cht ſeint (pacte in terioꝛ vel exterioꝛ)vñ
das laß dich nit wundern das es inen ſo
eigentlichen trompt/das ſie wenten es ſei
an im ſelber alſo. Dir trompt etwam na
türlichen ſo eigentlich von eim ding. Als
wie du ſo vil guldin habeſt oder etwā tro-
met dir/wie du bei den mannen ſeieſt/ oō
bei den frawen/ oder habeſt das vnd das
zū eſſen/vnd tromet dir ſo eigentlichē/ dz
dir trompt es ſei kein traum es ſei alſo in
der warheit/vnd wen du erwacheſt ſo iſt
nüt da. Einer kan etwan vers in dem
traum machen. Einer findet etwas in dē
traum/ das er in wanchem nit findē kan
kan das die natur/wie vil mee kan ſolichs
der böß geiſt/da ein menſch went das nit
iſt. Alſo hör ein exempel.

Ich liß dz ein prediger kam in ein dorff
Da was ein fraw die ſagt wie ſie zū nacht
alſo vmb für. Der prediger kam zū ir vñ
ſtrafft ſie darumb/ſie ſolt darnō ſton wan
ſie für nimer vnd würde betrogen. Sie
ſprach wöllent ir es nit glauben/ſo wil ich
es euch zeugen. Er ſprach ia/er wolt es ſe
hen. Da es nacht ward da ſie faren wolt
da rüfft ſie im/da ſie faren wolt da legt ſy
ein mülten vff den banck/da man deick
in macht in den dörffern/ vnd befund in
dem land bachet iederman ſelber. Da ſie
in der mülten alſo ſaß vnd ſich ſalbet mit
dem öl vnd ſprach die wort die ſie ſprechē
ſolt. Da entſchlieff ſie alſo ſitzen/da went
ſie ſie für/ vnd het ſemliche freud in wen-
dig dz ſie fechtet mit hendē vñ mit füſſen

Figure 11.5 Hans Baldung Grien, *Weather Spell*, 1516, woodcut illustration in Johann Geiler von Kaysersberg, *Die Emeis* (Strasbourg:

Johann Grüninger, 1516), fol. 37v, 30.2 × 19.8 cm. Frankfurt Am Main, Universitatsbibliothek J. C. Senckenberg, B Q 15/117.

Figure 11.6 Hans Baldung Grien, *Witch's Sabbath, c.* 1514, pen and ink with white highlights on bluish green prepared paper, 28.95 × 20 cm. Paris,

Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques, RF 1083.

© RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

Figure 11.7 Hans Baldung Grien, *Defecating Woman*, 1513, red chalk on prepared paper, 19.9 × 19.9 cm. Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, KdZ 299.

© Kupferstichkabinett. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

Intellectual Contexts for the *Witch and Dragon*

The *Malleus Maleficarum* drew heavily on the late thirteenth- or early fourteenth-century gynecological text *De secretis mulierum* by Pseudo-Albertus Magnus, one of the most authoritative and widely accessed books on women, with publications spanning three centuries.[61] In the introduction to the most widely disseminated version of *De secretis mulierum*, the anonymously penned 'Commentary A' states that the 'moving cause' for the composition of the thesis was that a 'certain priest' had requested that Albert write him a book on these dangerous 'secrets' of women:

> The reason for this [request] is that women are so full of venom in the time of their menstruation that they poison animals by their glance; they infect children in the cradle; they spot the cleanest mirrors; and whenever men have sexual intercourse with them they are made leprous and sometimes cancerous. And because an evil cannot be avoided unless it is known, those who wish to avoid it must abstain from this unclean coitus, and from many other things that are taught in this book. Albert, seeing that the cause was just, consented to it, and thus we have the efficient cause for this book . . .[62]

The Plinian commentary became a characteristic scientific genre of the Renaissance.[63] Vadian, a successor to the esteemed German humanist Conrad Celtis, who was engaged in teaching philosophy and poetics in Vienna after 1508, put out an edition of the *historia* in 1513 expressly for the benefit of students.[64] Renaissance humanists in the North advocated that it be used as the standard text in place of Aristotle's *Opera* so as to avoid the prevalence of the medieval scholastic commentaries deriving from the monasteries, and efforts were made in Protestant universities to replace Aristotle with Pliny as the basic text of classical natural philosophy for the same reason. Within this hugely influential sourcebook appeared the following description of the feminine 'pollution' of menstruation:

> But nothing could easily be found that is more remarkable [*monstrificum*] than the monthly flux of women. Contact with it turns new wine sour, crops touched by it become barren, grafts die, seeds in gardens are dried up, the fruit of trees falls off, the bright surface of mirrors in which it is merely reflected is dimmed, the edge of steel and the gleam of ivory are dulled, hives of bees die, even bronze and iron are at once seized by rust, and the air is filled with a poisonous stink; to taste it drives dogs mad and infects their bites with an incurable poison. In addition, the bitumen which is found at certain periods of the year, floating on the lake of Judæa, known as Asphaltites, a generally very sticky substance which adheres to everything it touches, cannot be dissolved except by a thread soaked in the poisonous fluid referred to.[65]

This catalog of the evil effects of feminine blood was to appear with a great degree of fidelity in the seventh century *Etymologiae* of Isidore, Archbishop of Seville (*c.* 570–636), where he speaks of Woman in terms of being the

only menstruating animal.[66] The *Etymologiae* was hugely influential for humanists. It remained one of the most frequently consulted ancient reference books throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, with printed texts widely available after 1470 and approximately one thousand full or partial manuscripts surviving.[67] Isidore's account was reproduced nearly verbatim by Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486?–1535), a contemporary of Baldung's, in his work of natural philosophy and licit magic, *De occulta philosophia*.[68] It was written from 1509 to 1510, when Agrippa was just twenty-three. It circulated widely in manuscript form, though wasn't printed in its entirety until 1533. The conventional Plinian litany of menstrual *maleficia* had already informed the 1484 papal Bull of Innocent VIII authorizing the prosecution of the Witch Hunt in Germany, included as the frontispiece to *Malleus Maleficarum* in editions following its initial publication in Speyer in 1487.[69] This had the effect of transforming what had long been represented as the, by then, immediately recognizable side effects of menstruation into actionable crimes:

> Committing abuses with incubus and succubus demons, they have no fear of using their incantations, chants and conjurations and other unspeakable superstitions and acts of divination, as well as excesses, crimes and misdeeds, in order to cause and bring it about that the offspring of women, the progeny of animals, the produce of the earth, the grapes of the vines and the fruits of the trees as well as men, women, work animals, cows, sheep and other animals of various kinds, and also the vines, orchards, fields, pastures, wheat, grain, and other crops of the earth are killed, suffocated and wiped out. They also afflict and torture these men, women, work animals, cows, sheep and animals with terrible pains and torments, both internal and external, and keep the men from fathering children and the women from conceiving by impeding their ability to render the conjugal act to each other.[70]

For Renaissance medical and occult philosophy, the feminine 'defect' of menstruation was pathological, a symptom of the cool, moist, phlegmatic humor most dominant in women. The humors, bestowing one's personal nature, character and physical type, needed to be constantly maintained in balance, and resided in the blood.[71] In this model of the humors the fiery sanguine element is 'virtuously' heated into the white, more spiritual substance of semen in the paradigmatic male physiology, and purged as the improperly converted corruption of menstruation in the 'defective,' inverted, and therefore intrinsically unbalanced female physiology as 'superfluous blood.'[72] These typologies consistently appeared in elite, humanist literatures, and furnished a great body of erudite, allegorical lore and poetic imagery.[73] Adaptations of hierarchical Aristotelian theories of

natural philosophy contributed to the constructions of gender characteristics manifesting as exalted or fallen, superior or inferior, supported by the Aristotelian spectre of the female as inherently monstrous. "The reason is that the female is as it were a deformed male; and the menstrual discharge is semen, though in an impure condition; i.e. it lacks one constituent, and one only, the principle of Soul."[74] The inherent, fiery *virtus* of the normatively active, spiritualised, masculine 'sanguine' humor was seen to be exalted in the male, endowing them with powerful, well formed bodies, but to manifest in its detriment in the female, rendering them fluxient, ill defined, 'formless' and weak. The prevalent imagery for this feminine, physiological failure was alimentary, positing the fiery ('sanguine ') quality of blood as not being properly 'digested' in women due to their inferior 'heat.'[75]

The abundant, immodest hair of Baldung's *Hexen* is rendered similarly to the steaming efflux, or fumes, shown streaming from their genitals and the many vessels and jars that act as their signifiers (Figure 11.8), or from their feline familiar's mouth (Figure 11.6). His witches' hair typically exudes an extraordinary animus, like that of writhing, coiling serpents, evincing humanist, literary associations. Virgil famously described the Fury Allecto as having "serpents lodged in her sea-dark hair."[76] In this same vein, Pseudo-Albertus, in *De secretis mulierum*, cited Avicenna in claiming that serpents can be generated from the hair of a menstruating woman: "Take the hairs of a menstruating woman and place them in the fertile earth under some manure during the winter, then in spring or summer when they are heated by the sun a long, stout serpent will be generated, and he will generate another of the same species through seed."[77] An appended commentary by 'Commentator B' attempts to give a cogent explanation of why this should be so:

Figure 11.8 Hans Baldung Grien, *New Year's Greeting*, 1514, pen and ink with white highlights on brown prepared paper, 30.9 × 20.9 cm. Vienna,

Graphische Sammlung Albertina, 3220.

© Albertina, Vienna.

> The reason for this is that hairs are made from vapors that have risen to the cerebrum, and these humors are undigested in women, and they are poisonous because of the cold that remains in them. Therefore from this type of rotting a serpent is generated . . . . A woman who has her menstrual period ought to hide her hair, because in this time her hair is venomous. It is naturally cold and humid because during the menses the defect of natural heat tends to move to the rear of the body. Serpents cannot be generated from the hairs of males because the humors in men are well digested so their hair is not poisonous nor does it rot as fast as a woman's does.[78]

The normatively phlegmatic, feminine temperament is figured as being prone to bouts of saturnine melancholy and 'aecidia,' bilious attacks on the digestion. The efflux of menstrual blood is figured as beneficial to the woman suffering from conditions of 'aecidia' or melancholy, but dangerously adversarial to those people, animals, elements and territories external to her body.[79] In accordance with theologians and physicians, Pseudo-Albertus represented menstruation as the natural means by which a woman's body rid itself of its toxicity, with menstrual blood identified as a pathogenic, poisonous substance:

> Women are purged by means of their menstrual periods because excess humidity is removed, and if it remained coarse humors would be formed from it. Therefore, they are not suited for learning because of the coarseness of their spirits which stop up and deaden the brain.[80]

The noxious gaze of a menstruating woman was awarded the ability to 'contaminate' a new mirror. As avowed here, by the anonymous 'Commentator A,' glossing on Pseudo-Albertus*' De secretis*: "Another sign that a woman has her menstrual period is if she looks at a new mirror a red mark like a vein will appear in it . . ."[81] Originating in Aristotle's treatise on dreams, *De insomniis*,[82] the effect of menstruating women's gaze upon mirrors was reprised by Pliny, thereafter appearing in the works of revered theologians and natural philosophers like Alexander Neckam, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, or Peter of Limoges, who associated the dangerously toxic gazes of menstruating women with the deadly gaze of the basilisk.[83] In *De secretis mulierum*, 'Commentator A' follows the same line of logic in describing the venomous gaze of basilisks and the use of mirrors to kill them: "In the same way, a lizard is infected by seeing himself, because he emits poison. If you take a looking glass which will reflect the

humors back to the place where the lizard is he will be killed or infected by them."[84]

As with the feminine, 'menstrual' evil eye, a basilisk was figured to poison its victims with its gaze alone. The basilisk trope increasingly functioned as a signifier for poisonous, feminine nature, a cipher for Woman/Witch's monstrous toxicity and dangerous, menstrual gaze. By Baldung's time, the themes of feminine toxicity and basilisks thus had become indelibly linked via tropes unifying menstruation, monstrosity and the Evil Eye. Like the basilisk, women could curse or control with their gaze alone; they could cast the 'evil eye,' ensnare male lovers, or bewitch judges into leniency. Their eyes were not merely vents for the womb's 'evil vapors,' but also for the organ's nefarious and tyrannical influence.

Pollution, Poison Maids, Monsters, and Armageddon

Baldung's witch figure in the *Witch and Dragon* can be seen to have ably combined the abject fascinations with witches, monsters, demonic sedition, and toxic femininity with the popular medieval trope of the foully generated basilisk. The lizardlike creature can easily be read as a representation of a basilisk in close communion with its tropic corollary, the menstruating woman or natural witch. The streaming form that connects the witch and dragon/basilisk figure can then be seen to convey a symbiotic exchange of toxic, debased fire, manifest as the poisonous blood that both the toxic female and the basilisk monster exemplify and dispense. Baldung's contemporary, Agrippa, connected basilisks with witches and their desire to cause hurt:

> Now, by the above examples, it appears how the affection of the phantasy when it vehemently intends itself doth not only affect its own proper body but also anothers. So also the desire of witches to hurt doth bewitch men most perniciously with steadfast looks. To these things Avicenna, Aristotle, Algazel, and Galen assent. For it is manifest that a body may most easily be affected with the vapor of another's diseased body which we plainly see in the plague and leprosy. Again in the vapor of the eyes there is so great a power that they can bewitch and infect any that are near them as the cockatrice or basilisk which kill men with their looks.[85]

A medieval account of the monstrous birth of the basilisk is found in Alexander Neckam's *De Naturis Rerum* of 1190.[86] This account moves into mainstream tradition with its inclusion in Pierre de Beauvais' enlarged

bestiary of 1218. In his version of the birth an egg forms in the body of an old cock, which lays it (secretly) in a dung heap. Like the unwholesome spells of witches, it is hatched by use of a toad. The resulting monster has the upper body of a rooster and the lower body of a snake.[87] According to Pliny the basilisk's blood has certain magical properties of benefit to the alchemist: "Its blood the magi praise to the skies, telling how it thickens as does pitch, and resembles pitch in color, but becomes brighter red than cinnabar when diluted."[88] Represented much as figured in *De Secretis Mulierum*, the ability of embodied toxicity to spread its taint to the 'adjacent air' through optical 'extramission' is also presented in the *Malleus Maleficarum* as actually being of benefit when combating basilisks by use of mirrors. The *Malleus Maleficarum* presents the argument that mirrors, like the blasting glance from the 'evil eye' of a menstruating woman, can be used as a weapon in the struggle with such legendary beasts.[89]

Baldung's contemporary, the famed physician and natural philosopher Paracelsus, emphasizes the monstrousness of the basilisk in *De natura rerum libri IX*, first published in Strasbourg in 1584. The basilisk was both wondrous and monstrous in that it could kill merely by its appearance or glance. Paracelsus likens the basilisk's ability to inflict harm to the malefic powers of the *menstruum*, and again reiterates the main outlines of the Plinian litany. After giving a brief rundown of the menstrual convention's main points, he uses the horrific trope to accentuate the sheer venom of the basilisk. The basilisk does not simply mimic the toxic natural processes of women: it is intrinsically connected to it by birth. By placing menstrual blood, the greatest 'impurity of women,' into a glass bottle and leaving it to rot in the belly of a horse for a certain period, the monster and its deadly poison are generated.[90] The basilisk and Woman are, thereby, kindred monstrosities:

> Thus you see with regard to the basilisk, which is a monster above all others, and than which none is to be more dreaded, since a man can be killed by the very sight and appearance of it, for it possesses a poison more virulent than all others, with which nothing else in the world can be compared. This poison, by some unknown means, it carries in its eyes, and it is a poison that acts on the imagination, not altogether unlike a menstruous woman, who also carries poison in her eyes, in such a way that from her very glance the mirror becomes spotted and stained. So too, if she looks at a wound or a sore, she affects it in a similar way, and prevents its cure. By her breath, too, as well as by her look, she affects many objects, rendering them corrupted and weak, and also by her touch. You see that if she handles wine during her monthly courses it soon turns and becomes thick. Vinegar which she handles perishes and becomes useless. Generous wine loses its potency. In like manner, amber, civet, musk, and other strongly smelling substances being carried and handled by such a woman lose their odour. Gold, corals, and many gems are deprived of their

> colour, just as the mirrors are affected in this way. But—to return to my proposal of writing about the basilisk—how it carries its poison in its eye. You must know that it gets that power and that poison from unclean women, as has been said above. For the basilisk is produced and grows from the chief impurity of a woman, namely, from the menstrual blood.[91]

The basilisk was a liminal beast and thereby served as an apt epigram for feminine pollution, an impure, ambiguous mix. Like other Renaissance figures for the womb, it is a readily abjected, paradoxical cipher, simultaneously holy and foul, powerful and weak, magical and unclean. While Paracelsus and other respected medical philosophers speculated on the identity of the Antichrist as the papal 'basilisk' in the Vatican,[92] tales of monstrous births circulated in popular and elite reception as emblems of the woman-borne pollution of lust and of the imminence of the prophesied 'Last Days.' Monsters, evidencing the working of 'wonders' by Satan and his legions of demons, 'false preachers,' 'false prophets,' and witches, were the necessary coeval of the belief in Armageddon.[93] Monstrosities issuing from women who conceived while menstruating, just as from witches who copulated with devils, were read as 'signs' heralding the onset of the Apocalypse. The *Malleus Maleficarum* mounted a convincing case for the very real existence of the legendary 'poison maid,' remediated as witch, with the description of how, "without any drinking of poison they destroy souls merely through the violence of their chant."[94]

The poison maiden trope likely first appeared in Europe in the thirteenth century in the *Secretum Secretorum*, a Latin translation of the Arabic *Kitab Sirr al-Asrar*, which became so popular that it was one of the most widely read texts of the European middle ages, with more than two hundred manuscripts in Latin alone.[95] During the thirteenth century the *Secretum* was translated into several European languages in prose and rhymed versions. Hiltgart von Hürnheim, a cloistered Cistercian nun, gave the first prose translation of the popular work into Middle High German in 1282, with heated descriptions of the poison maiden's fatal allure, as the result of having been nurtured on snake venom since childhood.[96] The Venomous Virgin or Poison Maiden theme subsequently became a well-known motif in medieval European medical and religious lore, appearing in the literatures of France, Germany, England, Spain and other countries. The best-known story of the encounter between Alexander and a poison maiden tells how a gorgeous but deadly young princess was sent to the great conqueror in an assassination plot by her mother, a seditious Indian queen.

This tale, in which Aristotle warns his former pupil of the danger in a letter, was also taken up in a collection of anecdotes, fables and stories in Latin that appeared in 1473 under the title *Gesta Romanorum*.[97] There were seven editions in circulation in the sixteenth century and, like the *Secretum Secretorum*, the *Gesta Romanorum* enjoyed broad distribution and a relatively large readership.[98] This rich and varied literary collection was not only meant to entertain; the individual stories were also designed to edify readers in the realm of Christian ethics. Each story was treated as an exemplum and was followed by the obligatory *moralizacio*. In the Christian context, the maiden's physical beauty does not reflect spiritual purity. Instead, the sight of the maiden's pulchritude evokes an overwhelming carnal desire in Alexander. Thus the maiden's beauty not only contaminates his body, but, what is far worse, infects his spirit with lust. In the *Gesta*, the prisoner who is led in to stand the test of the maiden's tempting but deadly embrace, before Alexander is ever allowed to touch her, embodies the preference for lowly, sensual beauty. He is 'rightfully' punished with the instant death her embrace inflicts. The Indian queen in the story, who feeds her own daughter poisonous plants in order to 'embed' her as a secret, 'sleeper' weapon later, is assigned the Christian vice of greed. The emphasis in the *Gesta Romanorum* is on the gratuitous portrayal of Alexander as an exemplary Christian man threatened by poisonous feminine envy, venery, greed and betrayal.

Another example of the prominence of the poisonous maiden theme in the German middle ages is its widespread proliferation through folkloric media, such as the songs and stories of the Minnesänger Heinrich von Meissen, popularly known as *Frauenlob*.[99] His reworking of the material granted the Poison Maiden the ability to murder her erotic victims simply by means of her breath and glance, making her analogous to the basilisk monster. The widespread tradition of the Poison Maiden crossed disciplines, literatures, sciences, medicine, folklore, and art forms. The phenomenon of deadly poisonous young women, not in connection with fairy tales, the trials of ancient rulers, or apocryphal tales of legendary conquerors, but within a pseudo-medical/theological misogynic discourse, was presented as empirical proof in the *De secretis mulierum*, which credited women with these phantasmagorical, basilisk-type attributes as the result of toxic vapors accumulated from pent-up menstrual 'venom' poisoning the entire system:

> Another reason is that they are used to poison, for, as Averroes tells us in the prologue of his third book on Physics, some people were so accustomed to eat poison that it became their food . . . . But the question might arise, why do menses kill children and not the women themselves? The answer is that women of a certain age are accustomed to them, and so they are not harmed by menses, for illness is not caused by what you are used to. Thus, Avicenna, in the fourth book of the *Canon*, tells of a certain young woman who was so accustomed to eat poison that she was entirely venomous, and she later killed many kings and lords who had intercourse with her. One natural cause could be that nature always does what is best, and that she ordered the bodies of these women to be filled with menses for some time, so she saw to it that they could tolerate this. That this is possible naturally appears from poisonous animals, such as spiders and snakes.[100]

Another reason for the prevalence of feminine 'venom' has to do with women's questionable tastes in 'coarse,' or 'foul smelling' foods when menstruating, pregnant or postmenopausal.[101] However, images of 'eating' poison and becoming 'venomous' due to accumulations of menstrual poison appear interchangeably, as both conditions derive from menstrual defectiveness as their common source.

The Monstrous Womb

As we have seen, the association of women with monsters and monstrousness extends back at least as far as Aristotle, who postulated the human norm in terms of bodily organization based on the male paradigm in his *Generation of Animals*.[102] The female form is an anomaly, according to this model, a variation on the main theme of mankind that only happens when and if something goes wrong or is defective (or deficient) in the reproductive process. The *topos* of women as a sign of abnormality or 'deformed male' props up the derivative *topos* of difference as a mark of inferiority, which remains a constant in Western scientific discourse.[103] One of the byproducts this association has produced is the misogynistic literary genre of antifeminist satire, which trades upon abjection and horror of the female body. This imagistic 'code' made use of the kinds of intensely sexualized, scatological imagery parlayed by the ancient, misogynist satirists.

Classical works of ancient, antifeminist humour were rolling off the major printing presses, in the North and in Italy, during the years of Baldung's artistic production, streaming toward an enthusiastic reception and collectorship.[104] Misogynist satires by authors such as Lucian, Juvenal, Ovid, Virgil and Tertullian, and vernacular works by their medieval emulators (e.g. Giovanni Boccaccio, Walter Map and Jean de Meun) were

equally popular with the humanist literati. These works provided models for a stylistically arch approach in delivering up misogynistic representations of women and their perversely inferior bodies for ridicule. Stylistically, the satirical text is, itself, inherently monstrous, and affords an expression of a degree of monstrousness that might shock in other literary genres.[105] The prominent humanist and alderman of Nuremberg, Willibald Pirckheimer, employed similar stylistic forms in mentoring his protégé, Albrecht Dürer, throughout a lengthy, well-documented letter correspondence, and it is likely that the attitudinal 'climate' of classical, misogynistic satire also invested the culture of Baldung's tutelary atelier.[106] In the *Witch and Dragon*, with its strange, foaming stream of foully ingested efflux, Baldung may be seen to have mediated visually what Boccaccio contributed to early humanist literature with his antifeminist satire, *Il Corbaccio* (*c.* 1355), in which he pillories women's physicality by creating an analogy between the female genital and the capacious Gulf of Setalia, "hidden in the Valley of Acheron beneath its dark woods, often russet in color and foaming with foul grime and full of creatures of unusual species, but yet I will tell of it . . ."[107]

The suitability of menstrual fluid for the significantly combined roles of humoric combustible and monstrous comestible is supported by several factors. Considering that sixteenth-century gynecological discourses held that menstrual fluid was, itself, a form of degenerated, toxic fire, it may be thought a fine, poisonous 'food' by which to nourish the venom of an infernal serpent, or basilisk. After all, was not the basilisk nurtured and engendered in just such a soup? Like the archetypical poison maiden herself, a basilisk might be seen to thrive on poison. Baldung's young witch feeds the basilisk with a particularly appropriate kind of venom, utilizing a poison (as Paracelsus has described it, above) 'more virulent than all others.' It makes sense that this immodest girl, who combines Woman, Witch, and Venomous Virgin into one, deadly cipher, should feed her monstrous offshoot with the 'chief impurity of a woman,' one with which, the image suggests, she is amply equipped. It is a readily available toxin that she carries, just like the basilisk, in her eyes, touch, and breath—with which "nothing else in the world can be compared."[108] Might the young witch pictured here simply be seen as 'stoking' the deadly, venomous power of her intimate familiar—her menstruous, monstrous 'child'—an incendiary activity she undertakes at both ends of the creature's unnatural, monstrous anatomy?

Based on Plato's characterization of the organ, elite discourses constructed the womb as willfully wandering about the body causing havoc much as witches were constructed to wander the countryside causing mayhem. The 'wandering womb' was conceived as being constantly, catastrophically driven by prodigious, even 'gluttonous,' appetites, lustful motivations, and a mind of its own.[109] Considering the authoritative theories concerning the blasting power of unregulated menstrual substance, which, if carelessly strewn about, would infect and disorder the air, water, soil of the fields, food supplies, and livestock, and that the commission of such disordering was perceived as witchcraft, it would appear Baldung has presented us with the image of a very clear incentive driving his subjects' monstrous intercourse. For it seems evident that a shared, aggressively nihilistic will provides the 'moving cause' for this polluted pair's bestial coupling. In that this particular form of unholy conjunction seems an ideal, symbiotic compact for such a pair, it is possible to view Baldung's obscene rendering as titillating, insider's view 'behind the veil,' proffered for those elite, learned few who are versed in the venomous Woman/Witch's inverted mysteries. Affording a glimpse of the hidden forces at work in the commission of feminine-based witchcraft, Baldung shows us that it is sourced, like all such evils of the fallen world, in the 'Pandora's Box' of the arousing, yet horrifying, feminine body.

With its suspiciously cervical oral opening, Baldung's 'appetitive' basilisk drinks down and swallows the impure stream emitted by the young witch. To reference and express the trope of uterine venery, flagrant disobedience, and vagrant, willful appetites, Baldung created his basilisk/dragon as a glyph of the wandering womb. This basilisk is not merely symbiotic with the young woman/witch as polluted matrix, 'foul vessel' or walking womb, it is visually synonymous with her. This is the abject force of the *Witch and Dragon* image, and it is unlikely to have required explanation in the eyes of its clerically educated consumers.

Conclusion

Baldung was not invested in depicting the actual sabbaths of real witches; his treatment of the theme was emblematic. He was interested in communicating in the private, elite, imagistic language of his urbane and erudite milieu, visually discoursing on how to *interpret* the sabbaths and the

sexual nature of their profane celebrants. This exchange between Baldung and his clients and collectors was one whereby there existed a perfect reciprocity between the accepted world of his contemporaries and its exactly inverted reflection. As pioneered by Baldung, deeply abject, erotic witchcraft figures forged indelible associations among what is forbidden and what is desired, such that the intensely polluted and profane becomes, in a tight, inescapable loop of meanings, the overwhelmingly erotic and desired. The result is a kind of classically inspired, religious pornography. In his iconic *Witch and Dragon* image, Baldung expertly purveyed the clerically constructed, phantasmagorical, lust-filled 'secrets' of women, mediated as witchcraft, through precisely constructed, iconographic codes of reference, inference, and semiotic meaning.

Playing to his elite clientele's medically and theologically informed expectations, he communicated to his audience via a learned, antifeminist, satirical, visual lexicon. The iconographic shifts Baldung and his emulators brought about contributed to the trends toward seeing 'witches' not merely as silly, deluded women, who should not be taken seriously, but as life destroying, sexual threats. The artist pictured witches as malignant forces of debased Nature, who worked their malignant plots against mankind via their terrifyingly destructive, marvellously erotic bodies. As in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, Baldung's figures characterized feminine witches as if driven to disordering and chaos by their monstrous, greedy, unchaste wombs. In their unceasing desire to bring about apocalyptic furore, his naked witches, young and old, appeared as the quintessential femme fatales. Like the Original Woman and her engineering of the Fall, these 'Daughters of Eve' must be examined closely in their every guise, but especially in their unholy consummations of lust remediated as witchcraft. The most powerfully engaging of Baldung's macabre, erotic pictures still harbor the power to somehow unravel, or undo, the beholder. Fascinated, horrified, repulsed, aroused and (however reluctantly) engaged, Baldung's captivated audiences are, themselves, subject to his nefarious exposés.

The full-blown abjection of Baldung's sexualized witch icons serves to locate the horny Devil in the eschatological narratives of witchcraft, though he is not likely to be seen within the picture frame. This artist conscientiously implicated his select viewers, and himself, in the demonic contract. Like Adam and all those who might fall to Woman/Witch, or to her familiar serpents' wiles, the viewers' curiosity implacably draws them

into collusion with the image's mortifying effects. Implicated by their own concupiscence, they are inveigled to look deeply into the secret, corporeal abominations of witches. Tricked into self-evidencing the ongoing engine of the Fall, they themselves risk the plight of becoming witch-ridden melancholics. However degrading these sights may prove, and however much the viewer of such scenes may try to look away, they are morbidly addicted, from first glimpse, by their own acquisitive, visual appetite, operating through their helplessly engaged, voyeuristic gaze. Forced to witness the many, copious, bodily 'pollutions' that exit from between the young witches' legs and buttocks, Baldung's elite audience experiences the ultimate, 'inverted' evil, in (and as) the abject, shamed, corporeal body, manifest as the submissively overwhelmed perception. The recurrent image of the feminine, sexual source of lust colonizes its hapless, 'contaminated,' masculine subscriber. The dynamic poles for this engine of destruction are located at the terminals of viewer and viewed, constructed feminine 'nature' and an endless, abject, masculine fascination. The 'moving cause' of Man's exile from the paradisiacal estate of divinely ordained self-sovereignty is actually to be found within the consumer of the images' obsessive focus. It is the motive force animating the desirous, cultural savant, the lustful, clerical art collector, the scholar seduced by forbidden knowledge, and the profane, luxurious temerities of the image itself.

To what degree Baldung's mediations of menstruous/monstrous women as witches contributed to formal constructions of witchcraft as an exclusively feminine (or effeminate), sexual enterprise, we can never truly know. All that is certain is that the idea of the witch as typically feminine proliferated in Northern Europe during the latter part of the sixteenth century and informed the later, more savage era of the Witch Hunt. Baldung's iconic imagery—teeming with busy, mysteriously engaged, obsessively lust-focused, female, naked witches—furnished a highly collectible *genre* of luxury 'cabinet art,' simultaneously edifying and denigrating, horrifying and arousing. Witch themed pictures offered sixteenth-century Northern humanists the most delectable pastiche of moral perks for pornographic viewing, such as might be enjoyed by prominent and reputable churchmen, jurists, physicians, inquisitors, theologians and leaders of the Northern Reform. As, perhaps, the principal work of abject eroticism to have come from Baldung's hand, his *Witch and Dragon* (or, perhaps more aptly, *Witch and Basilisk*) epitomized a new, intensely

sexualized iconography of witchcraft, favored by his select male audience during the early decades of the German Witch Hunt.

Notes

1 Brinkmann (2007).
2 Schade (1983, 98).
3 Baldung was awarded a lock of Dürer's hair at the senior artist's death, establishing him as the recognized heir of Dürer's humanist prestige and artistic legacy. Koerner (1993, 249–51).
4 Scholastic rhetoric traditionally favored the conventional theme of feminine pollution in polemical disputation, discoursing along conventional lines of the *contemptus mundi* genre of literary exposition. In his *Exposito Symboli*, written in 404 for the instruction of catechumens, Rufinus used the same polemic in order to emphasize Christ's spiritual imperviousness to feminine pollution, whereby the womb is basically compared to a sewer or cesspool. See McLaughlin (1991). For early patristic authors, birth, as well as the womb itself, are portrayed as bloody and sickeningly polluted. See Jerome (1883, cols. 202–3) and Augustine of Hippo (1886, cols. 467–72). Cf. McLaughlin (1991, 150).
5 Boudreau (1979, 129–31).
6 Zika (2003, 290).
7 See Fischel (1957) and Borries (1989, 95).
8 Brinkmann (2007, 43).
9 Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, Inv. 88. The panel painting depicts the prince of the Holy Roman Empire with his spouse Ottilie of Katzenelnbogen and their 15 children gathered in adoration of the Virgin and Child with St. Anne.
10 Borries (1989, 95).
11 Brinkmann (2007, 36–49).
12 Brinkmann (2007, 43).
13 Koerner (1993, 328).
14 Burns (2003, 16).
15 Eisenmann (1875).
16 For a bibliography of literature on Baldung before 1915, consult Escherich (1916).
17 Hartlaub (1961, 32).
18 Koch (1941, 31; 100).
19 Schade(1983, 76–7; 92).
20 Koerner (1985).
21 Koerner (1993, 336–46).
22 Hults (1987).
23 Boudreau (1979, 129–31). As noted above, this seems unlikely as the creature's tongue is clearly visible beneath the mysterious form, and the directional flow of the stream would seem to originate with the witch, as it is narrower at the point of bodily exit and widens as it descends into the dragon's maw.
24 Siefert (1997).
25 Siefert (1997, 75).
26 Brinkmann (2007, 61).
27 Pokorny (2008).
28 Koerner (1993, 357–8).
29 Koerner (1993, 324). Baldung's 1510 woodcut circulated widely, given the four versions and four additional copies by other artists that have survived. With his elevated social status, Baldung entered into successful business ventures in both Strasbourg and Freiburg, where he

produced art for elite, intellectual, and religious patrons. The Margrave of Baden, Christoph I, purchased the so-called *Margraves' Panel* by Baldung around 1510. In the ecclesiastical realm, Baldung's artistic patrons included Archbishop Ernst von Weltin, Cardinal Albrecht von Brandenburg and Bishop Wilhelm von Hohenstein. Schade (1983, 50). See also Zika (2002, 20).

30 Hults (1987) and Brinkmann (2007, 36–73; 116–123).

31 Shestack (1981, 4).

32 Hults (2005, 75).

33 Shestack (1981, 4–5).

34 Hans Baldung assumed the nickname of 'green' during his apprenticeship with Dürer, perhaps due to his preference for green attire. The name may also have referenced 'Grienhans,' a devilish, folkloric figure. Grienhans was a rakish womanizer who traveled around the countryside disguised as a Junker, horseman or hunter. Koerner (1993, 329; 439).

35 Pirckheimer, like Baldung, was the son of a university-educated lawyer in the employ of a bishop (at Eichstätt), and had also been brought up and educated in the humanist tradition.

36 Shestack (1981, 6).

37 Koerner (1993, 250).

38 Hults (2005, 81).

39 When Hans returned to Strasbourg from his stay in Freiburg, the city was in chaos due to the condemnation of Luther at the Diet of Worms. See Koch (1974, 18). In the final year of his life (1545), he was elected to serve as a senator on the Strasbourg city council as a representative of his guild, which suggests that he was, by that time at least, an avowed (if not devout) Protestant, as Roman Catholics were disallowed from holding office in Strasbourg during the 1530s and 1540s. See Brady (1975, 308).

40 See Hults (1987).

41 Hans's cousin, Pius Baldung, was a professor of law at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau from 1506, initially serving as dean of the legal faculty and rector of the university and becoming a municipal attorney for Strasbourg in 1522; he became chancellor of Tyrol in 1527, was an assessor on the imperial Supreme Court by 1531 and also became an imperial councilor in Speyer in that year. Brother Caspar, also a professor of law at the university of Freiburg (from 1502), succeeded Sebastian Brant as city advocate for Strasbourg in 1521 (a position he held until 1532). Caspar later became a judge in Maximilian's Imperial Chamber Court. Cf. Shestack (1981, 5), Koerner (1993, 328) and Brady (1975, 295–300).

42 The senior Baldung's employer was Albrecht of Bavaria, in office from 1478 to 1506. In the Papal Bull of Innocent VIII authorizing the Witch Hunt, *Summis Desiderantes Affectibus*, included in the front matter of most official printings of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, the bishops were instructed to disseminate the tome widely and to "either personally or through another cleric or clerics, make the foregoing public [. . .]." Innocent VIII (2009), 73.

43 See for example Broedel (2003, 21, 44, 93–7).

44 The *Malleus Maleficarum* was likely first printed in 1486, in Speyer, by the press of Peter Drach. Kramer and Sprenger (2009, 7).

45 Behringer (1987, 82).

46 While earlier scholars considered the book to have been coauthored by Jakob Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer, recent scholarship has indicated that Heinrich Kramer ('Institoris') was the actual author. See Kramer and Sprenger (2009, 2–6) and Broedel (2003, 18–19).

47 *Malleus Maleficarum*, I, vi; Kramer and Sprenger (2009, 170).

48 Petherbridge (2013, 15).

49 Roper (2004, 19–43; 152).

50 Koerner (1993, 328).

51 Clark (1997, 564).

52 Chrisman (1967, 51) and Koerner (1993, 357–8).
53 Virgil (1502).
54 Füssel (2005, 79).
55 Sullivan (2000, 376).
56 Geiler von Kaysersberg (1516). Baldung provided illustrations for two other influential witchcraft authors, Johannes Gerson and Ulrich Molitor. See Davidson (1987, 21). Gerson was chancellor at the University of Paris at the end of the fourteenth century and was instrumental in uniting popular magical practices with idolatry and apostasy. He laid out this connection in his treatise *De erroribus circa artem magicam* (On Errors Concerning the Art of Magic) in 1402. See Zika (2007, 39). Ulrich Molitor worked at Constance as a professor of law and procurator of the Episcopal curia there. In 1489, he published a dialogue on witchcraft, *Tractatus de Pythonicis Mulieribus* (Treatise Concerning Women Who Prophesy), also titled *De Laniis et Phitonicis Mulieribus* (On Female Witches and Seers), at the request of Archduke Sigismund of Austria. See Clark (2007, 126). The illustrations in Molitor's text are thought to have been instrumental in shaping the visual iconography associated with witchcraft. See Zika (2007, 26–7).
57 See Bailey (2006, 387) and McGuire (2005, 327).
58 Brady (1978, 190).
59 Denike (2003, 28).
60 The witch's pose is similar to that of the *Defecating Woman,* in that the torso is slightly twisted and one hip raised so as to offer a glimpse of the genitals under the raised leg. It differs from it in that the witch's legs are crossed at the ankle. Baldung often used a crossed-legs pose for his Witch, Eve, Venus and allegorical female figures. The crossed legs constitute a stylized gesture considered most seductive in the iconography of female nudes in this period. See Jones (2002, 264).
61 Lemay (1992, 181–2).
62 Pseudo-Albertus Magnus (1992, 60).
63 Grafton (1988, 787).
64 Füssel (2005, 104).
65 Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, VII.xv, 64–5; Pliny the Elder (1938–63, vol. 2, 549). (Italics mine, translation slightly corrected.)
66 Isidore, *Etymologiae*, XI, i. See Isidore de Seville (1992, 140–2).
67 Grafton (1988, 784).
68 Agrippa von Nettesheim (2006, 127–8).
69 Christopher S. Mackay, 'Introduction,' in Kramer and Sprenger (2009, 8–12).
70 Innocent VIII (2009, 71–2).
71 See Jacquart and Thomasset (1985, 11) and Yates (1979, 59–60). Cf. Cadden (1993, 17; 184).
72 Aristotle (1943, II, iii, 737a25–30 and IV, vi, 775a15–16). Albertus Magnus (1968), *Quaestiones de animalibus*, XV.19, and V.4. Cf. Cadden (1993, 22–3) and Wood (1981, 715).
73 McCracken (2003, ix–x; 3–5; 110–11).
74 Aristotle (1943, 175) (II iii, 737a25–30). See also IV vi, 775a15–16. Cf. Horowitz (1976).
75 Aristotle (1943, II i, 731b31–732a1) and Pseudo-Albertus Magnus (1992, 77; 79; 102).
76 Virgil (2007, 168–9).
77 Pseudo-Albertus Magnus (1992, 96).
78 Pseudo-Albertus Magnus (1992, 96).
79 Bynum (1991, 215).
80 Pseudo-Albertus Magnus (1992, 70).
81 Pseudo-Albertus Magnus (1992, 131).
82 Aristotle, *De insomniis*, 459b24–460a32

83 Neckam (2003, CLIII); Albertus Magnus, *Quaestiones super De animalibus*, lib. IX, qu. 9; Albertus Magnus, *De anima*, Lib. II, Tract. 3, Cap. 1; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Pars I, Qu. 117, Art. 3 ("Utrum homo per virtutem animae possit corporalem materiam immutare"), ad 2; Peter of Limoges, *De oculo morali*, VIII. 7. All these and more examples are quoted and contextualized in Hub (2016). Pliny knows both motifs but still does not connect them; Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, VII, xv, 64 and XXVIII, xxiii, 82. For the history of the basilisk in general, see Sammer (1998, 1999).
84 Pseudo-Albertus Magnus (1992, 130).
85 Agrippa von Nettesheim (2006, 201–2).
86 Neckam(2003, 237).
87 McCulloch (1960, 62–9; 199).
88 Pliny the Elder (1938–63, vol. 2, 548).
89 *Malleus Maleficarum*, I, ii; Kramer and Sprenger (2009, 116).
90 Paracelsus (1584), Lib. I: 'De generatione rerum naturalium'; Paracelsus (1926–32, vol. 3, 221–9; 225). Cf. Harrer and Harrer (2003).
91 Paracelsus (1894, vol. 1, 123).
92 Weeks (1997, 163–5).
93 Clark (1997, 365–66).
94 *Malleus Maleficarum*, I, ii; Kramer and Sprenger (2009, 109).
95 Penzer (1952, 18–19).
96 Hürnheim (1963, lxiii).
97 Swan (1905, 44–6).
98 For the German tradition, see Weiske (1992). Cf. Tubach (1969, 295).
99 Hertz (1893).
100 Pseudo-Albertus Magnus (1992, 130–1).
101 Pseudo-Albertus Magnus (1992, 129).
102 See above, notes 74–7.
103 Braidotti (1994, 83). Cf. Bildhauer (2003, 90).
104 Füssel (2005, 17–18; 25; 50–4; 79; 96–8; 100; 114).
105 Braidotti (1994, 79–80).
106 Brinkmann (2007, 97–108).
107 The Gulf of Setalia was an actual, wide, windblown gulf. Boccaccio conflates it with Acheron, river of the underworld, or Hades. Boccaccio (1992, 175).
108 See above, note 93.
109 Plato (1929), *Timaeus*, 90E–91D. Cf. Cadden (1993, 14–15).

12 *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses Soeurs* and the Pleasures of Proliferative Criticism

Katherine Crawford

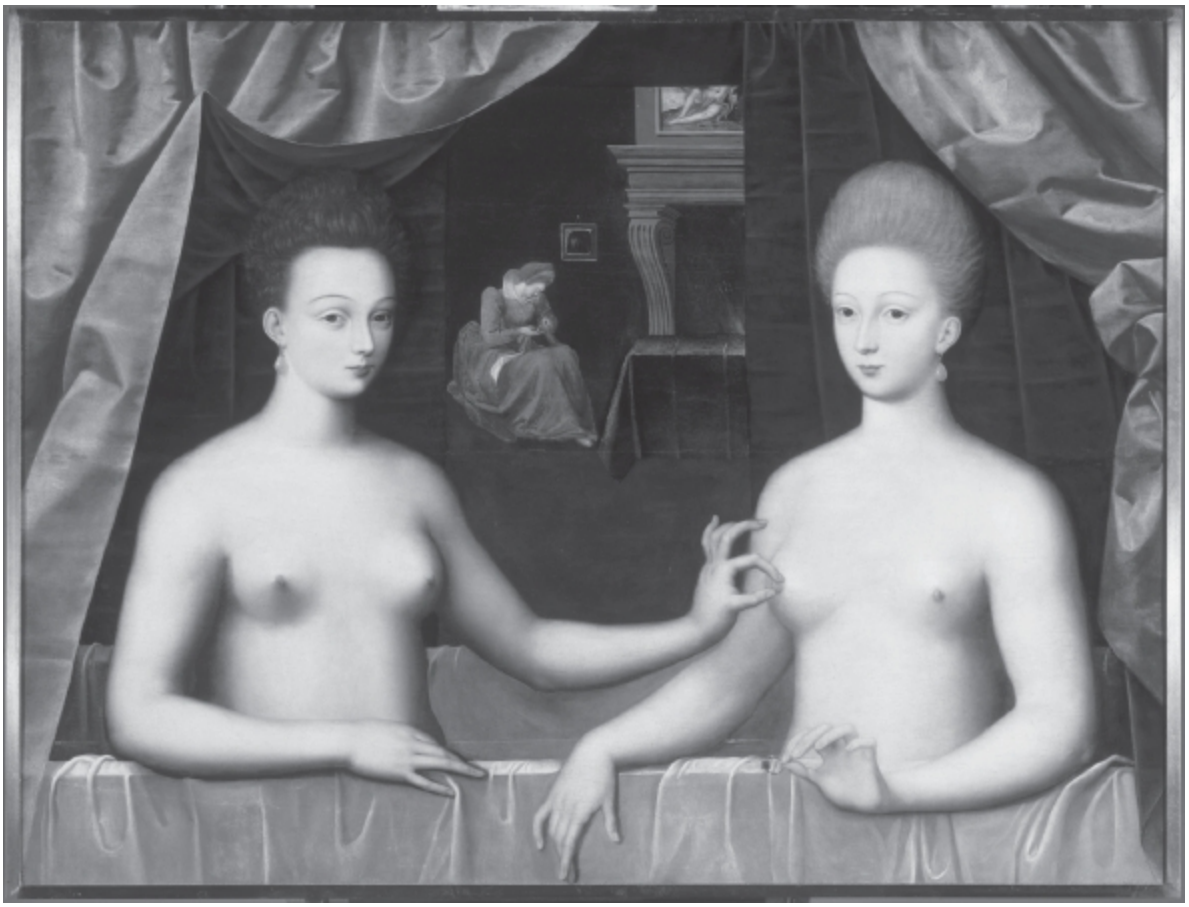

Figure 12.1 School of Fontainebleau, *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs*, 1594 (?), oil on wood, 96 × 125 cm. Paris, Louvre, RF 1937-1.

Photo: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.

Although featured in Louvre merchandise, with reproductions as various as refrigerator magnets, computer mouse mats, t-shirts, key chains, pendants, and Christmas ornaments, *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs* remains rather mysterious (Figure 12.1). We do not know who painted it or why. While historians are reasonably confident that Gabrielle d'Estrées, mistress of Henri IV of France (r. 1589–1610), is one of the subjects, there is room for doubt, and the identity of the other woman on the left, often identified as Gabrielle's sister Julienne-Hippolyte, is even less certain. What exactly the women are doing, what relationship their actions have to the images in the background, and what the painting meant both in its immediate context and in larger terms have prompted critical speculation in abundance. The ebb and flow of attention began with the painting itself. As Saloman Reinach and Ann Rose Plogsterth have demonstrated, several versions of the composition and multiple copies were painted by an artist or artists unknown, but the trail disappears from view by the mid-seventeenth century.[1] Then, in 1891, Baron Jérôme Pinchon bought the painting he called *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs*. The painting retained this name when it was sold after his death in 1897.[2] At this point, critics including Marie Alphonse René Maulde La Clavière, Louis Dimier, Hélène Adhémar, and Jean Louis Schefer worked to identify the individuals, objects and actions depicted in the painting and offered interpretive schemes based on their analyses.[3] On the one hand, Roger Trinquet, Charles Sterling and Hélène Adhémar have proffered allegorical readings of the painting.[4] On the other hand, historians including Kathleen Wellman, Janine Garrisson and myself have situated the painting in its original political context.[5] Recently, Will Fisher, Chris Roulston and Doris Guth have presented cases for feminist and queer readings of *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs*.[6]

Collectively, the critics agree on little about the painting. Even the basic work crucial to interpretation has been carried out under conditions of great uncertainty. In addition to questions about the identities of the sitters, we do not know the artist, what he (presumably) meant by painting these women within a tradition of similar paintings, why he included the specific elements he did, if the painting was intentionally political, intensely personal, deliberately erotic, or something else entirely. Our lack of precise knowledge has led to layers of speculation, including efforts to situate *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs* within French national traditions,

to understand the imagery as commentary on the Renaissance monarchy and its erotic practices, and to claim the painting for twenty-first-century sexual politics. Each set of interpretive efforts makes valuable contributions to the conversation, producing a vibrant critical history in which possibilities have multiplied. This proliferation of meanings and interpretations reflects a situation in which the investment in precise knowledge meets the inability to be certain. What I want to suggest is that the pleasures of proliferation offer a way of understanding the image, both in its original context and in terms of the weird and wild appropriations of the painting in twenty-first-century popular culture. In this reading, *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs* is about the deliberate opacity of the image encouraging a range of identifications—historical, intellectual and erotic.

Figure 12.2 School of Fontainebleau, *Gabrielle d'Estrées and her Sister the Duchesse de Villars*, date unknown, oil on canvas, 59 × 72 cm. Château de Fontainebleau, RF 1970.47.

Photo: © RMN-Grand Palais / Gérard Blot / Art Resource, NY.

Gabrielle and her Pictorial Offspring

At the time of its execution, *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs* was at once quite familiar and something of a departure.[7] As Henri Zerner notes, the painter utilized the tropes of the woman in her bath and the woman at her toilette that extended back to the reign of François I (r. 1515–47).[8] Raphaël Bouvier goes even further, situating the painting in Italian Renaissance lineages of nude portraiture.[9] But the depiction of two women together in the bath was a departure, and based on the fact that many subsequent versions of the painting were produced, this was a popular choice. Virtually from the outset, then, *Gabrielle* prompted or inspired an abundance of copies.

In her research on nude portraiture, Ann Rose Plogsterth identified at least twenty-three separate paintings with similar subject matter, which she classified in three general typologies: first were images that featured the nipple-pinching gesture (Figure 12.1); second were images in which a wet nurse suckled an infant prominently in the background (Figure 12.2); and third were images in a vertical format with one of the bathers sitting on the edge of the tub (Figure 12.3).[10]

Figure 12.3 School of Fontainebleau, *Gabrielle d'Estrées with her Sister*, late sixteenth century (?), oil on wood, 129 × 97 cm. Florence, Uffizi, 1890, no. 9958.

Photo: Scala / Art Resource, NY.

Each of the three principle versions came in several variations and all three borrowed elements from earlier paintings, while the painting now in the Louvre (Figure 12.1) appears to be the original.[11] In the Louvre version, Gabrielle d'Estrées sits upright in a bathtub with her sister. Nude from the waist up and engaging the viewer's gaze, the blond Gabrielle holds out a ring while her dark-haired sister squeezes Gabrielle's right nipple. Behind the tub, a servant woman is bent over her needlework. She is depicted in clothing that matches the colors surrounding Gabrielle in the foreground. Following the line upward from the sewing woman's head, there is a small, framed mirror, but the glass is almost entirely black, reflecting just a hint of white. The mirror both breaks the line and draws the eye toward the fireplace. The decorative bend of its grey stone mantle echoes the servant's posture. A hint of a fire glows red and yellow in the grate. A corner of a painting is visible on top of the mantle, and the painting within the painting appears to be an erotic image: a nude lower body, draped languorously, fills the corner that is visible to the viewer. In addition to completing the torso in the tub in the foreground, the legs are linked to the main image by the carefully arranged red drapery of the same shade and texture as the framing draperies in the foreground. The heavy curtain is pulled back to reveal Gabrielle, who is made to stand out against the dark interior behind her. The drapery above her sister is tacked up, creating a point that pulls the viewer toward the recesses of the image. The dark surround at once invites the eye inward and highlights the gestures of the principle figures. Here, the push/pull of the composition echoes the gesture in the foreground, with the arm in partial shadow except for the hand on Gabrielle's nipple in full light. The pinching of the nipple is reiterated in the smaller gesture of presenting the ring by Gabrielle, which comes out of the flat plane created by the tub. As Bouvier points out, the details evoke the canon of nude female portraiture, but the double protagonist format and the highly stylized performative setting require the viewer to move through the image in ways that single-sitter portraits do not.[12]

The original work features the erotic provocation of nude intimacy sexualized by the pinching of Gabrielle's nipple. The other two types generally reorganize the composition in ways that dampen the erotic elements. Both eliminate the nipple pinch, but also the presentation of the

ring and the suggestive erotic painting in the background are jettisoned. In several instances (both vertical and horizontal in orientation), the woman on the left is turned away from the viewer. In some of the paintings, the woman on the right plays with a string of pearls rather than presenting the ring and she looks to the side, instead of returning the viewer's gaze (Figure 12.2). Perhaps most astonishing of the variants are the ones with clothes. In several versions, both women are draped in clingy (but not transparent) dresses. Reinach suggests that this last variation reflects the growing sense of physical propriety in seventeenth-century France.[13] Plogsterth regards the clothed variants as "related to the general Counter-Reformation prudery in reaction to Mannerist pornography or perhaps even to a specific campaign against lewd pictures."[14]

Finally, three examples of the painting include inscriptions that identify the principle figures. In the first, the two women in the tub are identified in gold writing as Gabrielle and her sister, "Julienne-Hippolyte d'Estrées duchesse de Villars." In the background, a wet nurse holds a baby, also named in gold letters, "César, duc de Vendôme." Reinach believes that the inscriptions date to the early seventeenth century, and thus provide proof of the identifications.[15] But as Will Fisher notes, the appellation of Julienne-Hippolyte as duchesse de Villars presents some chronological difficulty: her husband did not receive the ducal title until 1627.[16] A second painting with the same inscriptions at the bottom, and a third with "Julienne Hippollite d'Estrées marquise de Villars" have been noted by Plogsterth, who observes that the titles may well have been added later.[17]

Why so many versions and variations? We cannot be certain, but perhaps part of the reason is that *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs* may reflect a rather significant sexual scandal at the court of Henri IV.[18] In 1572, Henri de Navarre married Marguerite de Valois in a ceremony marred by the eruption of the St. Bartholomew's Day massacres. Never transcending the political match of the marriage and thus rarely even residing together, Henri and Marguerite had no children and ceased living together entirely in 1586. They remained married despite their estrangement, but even before Henri became king of France (and while he was still married to Marguerite), he promised one of his mistresses that he would marry her if she gave him children.[19]

Once he became king, Henri's need for children, and particularly sons since women could not inherit the French throne, became acute. Aware of

his dynastic responsibility and seemingly willing to marry any woman who would give him sons, Henri met Gabrielle d'Estrées in November of 1590, and by April of 1591, the relationship was sexual. Although she married Nicolas d'Amerval, seigneur de Liancourt in August 1592, Gabrielle gave birth to Henri's son, César (the future duc de Vendôme) on 7 June 1594.[20] Almost immediately, Henri began campaigning to make Gabrielle his wife. On 27 August 1594, Gabrielle filed for an annulment over Liancourt's objections, and on 24 December, the marriage was dissolved.[21] Henri simultaneously pressured his wife Marguerite to request an annulment, counting on her to smooth matters with Pope Gregory XIII, who was not inclined to help Henri end his marriage so as to marry his mistress. Despite pressure from Henri, Marguerite stalled, negotiated and prevaricated.[22] Marguerite in particular refused to agree to an annulment for nonconsummation because that would allow Henri to recognize Gabrielle's children by him as his legitimate heirs. Henri's public recognition of César, and then Catherine-Henriette (born 1596) and Alexandre (born 1598), indicated that that was exactly his intention.[23]

Meanwhile, Henri made Gabrielle marquise de Monceaux in 1596 and duchesse de Beaufort in July of the following year. In royal ceremonial settings, he situated her in Marguerite's place, a move that appalled conservative courtiers.[24] As Henri made his marital intentions clear, some popular resistance emerged. Attacks on Gabrielle included calling her "the duchess of filth," referring to her as a "whore," and labeling César as "the legitimate son of a whore."[25] Gabrielle's death in childbirth on 10 April 1599 averted a political crisis. Retrospective diagnosis suggests she died of eclampsia or placenta previa, although at the time, the convenience of her death prompted speculation that she was poisoned.[26]

Whether it was the scandal of Henri's relationship or the allure of the composition itself or both, the painting known as *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs* hit a chord, as the multiple variants and copies attest. The literal proliferation of the image, however, was just the beginning.

A Profusion of Meanings

Despite the physical multiplicity of versions of the painting, *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs* produced little comment until it reemerged in 1890s. At that point, critics began debating the general meaning as well

as many of the elements in the original painting. The investment in precise knowledge ever since has collided with the anonymity of the painting's genesis and uncertainty about what exactly the painting and its elements mean. The multiplicity of critical responses has precisely *not* yielded a single, dominant interpretation, but instead, the contestation over meaning has produced a plethora of intellectual speculation.

Consider for instance the central gestures in the painting (Figure 12.1). Gabrielle d'Estrées sits upright in a bathtub with her sister. Nude from the waist up and engaging the viewer's gaze, the blond Gabrielle holds out a ring, while her dark-haired sister squeezes Gabrielle's right nipple. For Hélène Adhémar, the ring is Henri IV's coronation ring, which supports a reading of the painting as a comment on Gabrielle's marital aspirations.[27] However, Henri's coronation ring featured a diamond, while the stone in the painting looks blue.[28] Jean Louis Schefer believes the stone is instead a ruby.[29] Either a sapphire or a ruby may be understood to be less fraught with high political significance since neither matches the coronation ring. The ring could instead refer to the marital union that Henri had promised if Gabrielle bore him a son.[30] Finally, the ring presented to the viewer echoes the gesture found in earlier paintings that featured naked female bathers, such as *Woman at her Toilette* (Figure 12.4).[31] As for Julienne-Hippolyte, her gesture—pinching Gabrielle's right nipple—is consonant with practices described in medical texts to test for pregnancy, and especially for having conceived a male child.[32] But Edward Lucie-Smith sees the gesture as patently erotic,[33] and, as the variants that remove the gesture indicate, it was disturbing enough to warrant censorship.

Figure 12.4 School of Fontainebleau, *Woman at her Toilette*, late sixteenth century, 105 × 76 cm. Dijon, Musée des Beaux-Arts, CA 118 (Cat. 1883).

Photo: Gianni Dagli Orti / The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY.

Figure 12.5 François Clouet (?), *Lady in her Bath*, 1571, 92.3 × 81.2 cm. Washington, DC, National Gallery, Samuel H. Cress Collection, 1961.9.13.
Photo: Album / Art Resource, NY.

As for the woman in the background, interpretations locate her at once in the lineage of erotic portraiture and as a reminder of the prosaic round of

the household economy. In the original (Figure 12.1), she is bent over her needlework and depicted in clothing that matches the colors surrounding Gabrielle in the foreground. Earlier paintings featuring female bathers, including *Woman at her Toilette* (Figure 12.4), depict a woman working in the background, and more precisely, reaching into a tub perhaps to clean it. Still another example features a woman in a bath, with a servant woman in a simple, practical dress and her sleeves pushed up hauling water in the background (Figure 12.5).[34] For André Chastel, the servant in the background is a citation of earlier Italian compositions.[35] In *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs*, the orientation of the woman in the background is flipped and both her dress and activity suggest she is not a menial servant. Indeed, Chris Roulston considers the seamstress to be a "chaperone figure" who adds an element of domestic genre scene to the composition.[36] The neutral, almost incidental figure for Chastel is instead an element of sharp contrast for Roulston, for whom the demure domesticity of the chaperone offers a distinct counterpoint to the bold gaze of the nude women in the foreground.

If the central activity is the gestures of Gabrielle and Julienne-Hippolyte, their location—in a tub—has prompted ruminations on the moral import of the image. The associations of bathing with hedonism were exemplified by the erotic décor of François I's Appartement des Bains at Fontainebleau.[37] Baths as social spaces and sites of excess drew the ire of ascetic-minded preachers, who associated public baths with prostitution and licentious revelry.[38] Nadine Kuperty-Tsur understands the double portrait in a bath to be a comment on how inappropriate the king's mistress is as a possible queen of France.[39] But several critics have pointed out that neither a naked mistress nor women bathing were shocking as subjects. In everyday practice, women bathed together for want of space and to save resources.[40] As with the other elements in *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs*, the bath has been understood in a variety of contradictory ways. No matter what the investment in definitive knowledge, it has been stymied not only by the lack of certainty about the original conditions of production and intentions of the artist or patron, but also by the critical proliferation itself. The more speculation that accumulates, the less certain we are about accuracy of our 'facts.'

We are left, then, with interpretations that may utilize many of the 'facts' to create a story, but still may not entirely satisfy. Drawing on a medieval

satire tradition that featured women bathing, Roger Trinquet contends that the painting was an allegorical satire aimed at the amorous frivolity of Henri IV. That Henri took up with Henriette d'Entragues almost immediately after Gabrielle's death is crucial to Trinquet's thinking. The premise that the painting is a satire aimed at Henri leads Trinquet to argue that the painting depicts the transfer of Henri's affections from Gabrielle to Henriette. In support of this interpretation, Trinquet considers other versions of the painting as forms of "parodic reprise" of the original that indicate the "succession" of voluptuousness, fecundity and matrimonial ambition from Gabrielle to Henriette.[41] To make this hold together, Trinquet reads portrait images of Henriette as matching the woman with Gabrielle and sees the nipple pinch as an "insolent gesture" on Henriette's part.[42] Trinquet's final proof is a grisaille miniature in which the faces of the subjects have been altered to refer to Gabrielle and Henriette, with Henri leering at the women in place of the nurse or servant figure.[43] The elaborate pictorial program Trinquet describes seems implausible for a number of reasons (on which more below), but in the immediate, Henriette has no basis in the historical lineages of the image in that no one at the time or until Trinquet associated her with the painting. None of the paintings with identifications suggests Henriette, and her likeness does not match the woman with Gabrielle.[44] Even with the gap between *Gabrielle* and the iteration that named Julienne-Hippolyte, there is at least the possibility that someone who knew had a hand in identifying the sitters.

Even if we reject Trinquet's over-reaching reading of *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs* as implausible, his effort nonetheless contributes to the burgeoning conversation. The obsessive attention to detailed, empirical descriptions of the imagery in the painting reflects the investment of critics in the process of trying to understand. With each new debate, with each new conjecture, the possibilities increase. Rather than certainty, the critical debates have instantiated the pleasure of intellectual speculation.

Sexual Pictorial Politics

Nor is intellectual speculation the only pleasure on offer. For feminist and queer critics, the painting's opacity and resistance to reductive analysis have invited more politicized interpretations. In part directed at the conservative sexual politics of earlier interpretive modes, feminist and queer analyses

foreground the ambiguous erotics of the painting. As noted above, *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs* was a departure in its own moment because it featured *two* women in a bath. Critics have only recently taken up the obvious: the homoeroticism and the queer implications of the image. Moreover, the refusal to engage with the obvious can be understood as a classic example of lesbian invisibility.[45] Readings of the painting in terms of its homoerotic elements have been enabled by the recent challenge to the notion that lesbianism barely existed in the past. As literary critic Valerie Traub and others have demonstrated, same-sex female erotics were abundantly visible in early modernity. In everything from medical texts to visual images, women with other women operated outside the boundaries of heterosexual patriarchy, threatening its hegemonic claims. Traub contends that the anxiety caused by female–female desire led to the deliberate repression of same-sex female eroticism.[46] In terms of sexual politics, the erasure of references to the homoerotic image of two naked women bathing is a deliberate act of silencing.

The unsettling aspects of queer female eroticism, once rendered visible, are precisely why analyses of *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs* have only recently taken up the lesbian implications of the image. Will Fisher opens his argument by questioning Trinquet's emphatically heteronormative reading of the painting. Fisher finds Trinquet's assertions of the transparency of meaning, as when Trinquet explains at length that the nipple pinch was meant to highlight Gabrielle's beautiful breasts, to be labored apologetics for heterosexuality.[47] Fisher points out that, despite his avowed rejection of "Sapphic readings" of the painting, Trinquet actually highlights such readings by arguing against them. Trinquet's refusal of an erotic connection between the sitters also clears away the incestuous overtones. Fisher counters, arguing forcefully for understanding the image as at least potentially queer. For Fisher, the domestic ambiance of the painting and the intimacy of the women in the bath coalesce to at once present and constrain female sexuality. This tension, along with the broader coexistence of heteronormative and lesbian readings of the painting, point to *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs* as displaying a queer aesthetic.

Queer reading both accepts and brackets the presumption that *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs* depicts sisters.[48] To this end, Chris Roulston situates the painting in the larger tradition of female pair images and texts. The homoerotic image, Roulston argues, is in keeping with literary

homoeroticism in the Renaissance. William Shakespeare's cross-dressing heroines such as Viola in *Twelfth Night* and Rosalind in *As You Like It*, while heteronormative in the end by virtue of marriage, produce much play around homoerotic (mis)identification. Drawing on the work of Elizabeth Susan Wahl, Roulston points out that female intimacy was part of working through "contested models of sexuality" in the Renaissance.[49] The play around sexuality gradually fell away, so that by the eighteenth century, images of female couples were largely void of sexual overtones. Roulston situates this change within the growing dominance of the two-sex model, in which distinctive gender roles reflected and shaped presumptions about biological sexual difference.[50]

In a related but distinct line of analysis, Doris Guth is interested in the treatment of same-sex eroticism under the rubric of "sodomy" both in early modernity and by twentieth-century art historians.[51] For Guth, the controversies over identification of the sitters reflect the conservatism of art historical criticism. Within a tradition of understanding mistress portraits as either realistic or allegorical, critical debates over Neoplatonic idealism versus erotic intentionality have dominated discussion. With respect to *Gabrielle*, Guth argues that critics have looked past the homoerotic possibilities in favor of understanding the painting in terms of Henri IV's marriage plans with Gabrielle. In their efforts to read the image in idealized terms, critics ignore the obvious fact that the painting depicts two women in an erotic setting. Guth emphasizes that *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs* simultaneously stages Early Modern heteronormative imperatives and requires revision of the assumption that the image is entirely heterosexual. Early Modern attitudes toward same-sex female eroticism often reflected concerns about masculinity more than fears of lesbianism. French legal practice considered only penetrative female same-sex activity to be a crime.[52] The need to protect the gender order was the driving cultural imperative. For instance, when Pierre de Bourdeille, seigneur de Brantôme, in his gossipy memoirs of the French court, recounts an episode in which a woman gets hot and bothered while viewing a painting of women bathing, Guth emphasizes that the potential disruption of homoerotic desire was resolved by heterosexual intercourse.[53] As Brantôme reports it, the painting featured women, "touching between, feeling, rubbing, fingering, groping each other." One of the women could not

"contain any longer this ardor," and departed with her male servant in search of sexual relief.[54]

Within Renaissance viewing practices, Brantôme's story could also be about women having space to get excited, and once again, the critical assessments of *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs* point toward the proliferative possibilities embedded in painting. To follow Guth's argument in a different direction, when Gabrielle and her bathmate engage the viewer's gaze and invite the viewers into the intimacy of their gestures, they allow for both male heterosexual desire and female homoerotic desire. While evidence of Early Modern viewing practices is scant, looking at both (or many) sides of an argument is a well-known Renaissance reading habit.[55] Right there in the original of *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs,* the Renaissance love of paradox allowed that contradictory ideas or truths might exist at the same time is visible. The image of two women bathing and of the intimacy of their gestures can be understood as at once homoerotic and heterosexual; as at once invoking idealized love and earthy fertility; as at once a political comment about a royal marriage and a general statement about sexual desire; as at once a warning about the implications of desire and an invitation not only to look, but to speculate on these multiple meanings.

The abundance of critical commentary is built into *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs*. The later iterations of the image tried to limit the possible interpretations by minimizing the sexual and social tensions of the original, but turning Julienne-Hippolyte modestly away from the viewer, averting the challenging frontal gaze of the original, or clothing the figures all end up contributing to the proliferation of meanings. Rendering the lesbian subtext visible through feminist and queer criticism restores a multiplicity of reading that attaches to the dual nude subject.

Come on in; the Water is Fine

The specific historiography around *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs* really only dates from Baron Pinchon's purchase of the painting in 1891, but the discussion about it has rapidly accrued many layers. We can and have situated *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs* in terms of similar Renaissance paintings of bathing beauties; we can and have speculated on the possible meanings of the pictorial elements; we can and

have argued over its political, social and erotic implications. The certainty of any of our knowledge remains tenuous, however. Art historians are familiar with gaps in their knowledge, but *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs* is different. It has inspired proliferations of all sorts. The many copies of it and the variations within them in terms of how the sitters are configured and what they are doing are one kind of proliferation. The critical debates—with various investments in precise knowledge, in anonymity, in accepting or rejecting the erotic play of the image—are all founded on *not* knowing. The desire to make meaning enables proliferation and the constancy of appropriation requires that each iteration has meaning.

If the opacity of *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs* allows critics to fill in the story in a variety of ways (political, personal, art historical) or to read the painting in lineages (allegorical, feminist, queer) that suit particular moments or purposes, the painting has had another proliferative effect on twenty-first-century viewers. A computer search of images of the painting turns up all sorts of things: photos of women posed in the manner of the original painting (with or without clothes), couples of various sorts posing in front of the painting at the Louvre imitating the central gestures, photoshopped appropriations of the painting substituting male pairs, male/female pairs, stylized portraits in fruit and vegetables, two anthropomorphic cats, two anthropomorphic dogs, a version with the sitters clothed in a cross between sexual fetish gear and superhero costumes, another in which Julienne-Hyppolyte wears an apron and holds a hammer while Gabrielle cradles a French horn to her chest. There are three-dimensional versions, cartoons, and short films including and/or invoking the painting. Almost all are anonymous (like the original), and except for the inspiration of the original, the motives behind the investments of creative energy and resources are utterly unavailable as well.

The critical analyses have, somewhat unusually for a French Renaissance painting, been more than matched by popular appropriations and reimaginings. The early silence around the painting has been displaced by a profusion of voices, most of which are anonymous and obscure in intention but provocative in their political, sexual and erotic effects. Over time, the investment in precise knowledge and the meanings large and small of the painting has combined with its built-in resistance to certainty about the story or message or purpose of the painting to allow for the pleasures of historical conjecture about the sex lives of powerful men and women;

intellectual speculation and debate about the artistic practices, lineages and referents; and erotic identifications heterosexual, homosexual, and queer. *Gabrielle d'Estrées et l'une de ses soeurs* has turned not knowing into proliferation and proliferation into new forms of appropriative pleasure.

Notes

1 Reinach (1920) and Plogsterth (1991).
2 *Catalogue des objets de curiosité et d'ameublement des XVIe, XVIIe, et XVIIIe siècles* (1897, no. 1340, 141); Ver Heyden de Lancey (1935). The Louvre acquired the painting in 1937.
3 Maulde La Clavière (1897, 1898, 27–38), Dimier (1904, 188–90, no. 226), Adhémar (1950, no. 23) and Schefer (1969, 139; 141).
4 Trinquet (1967) and Sterling and Adhémar (1965). Allegorical readings privilege the symbolic meanings of elements of the composition to indicate concepts indirectly. In this case, the range of readings has been from the very general (Gabrielle as an allegory of perfect beauty) to the extremely specific (Trinquet reads each element of the painting in support of his identification of the sitters).
5 Garrisson (2006, 112–13), Wellman (2013, 1–2; 323–56) and Crawford (2003).
6 Fisher (1998), Roulston (2006), and Guth (2012).
7 The date of the painting is disputed. Sterling and Adhémar (1965, 33–4) date it to 1594 (Gabrielle's first pregnancy); Adhémar (1950) believing Gabrielle to be pregnant with her second child, prefers 1596; Bouvier (2005, 345) argues for 1599 on the grounds that Henri decided to marry Gabrielle that year, and the ring is the symbol of that decision. I prefer the 1594 date, as I believe that the painting refers to the birth of Gabrielle's first son.
8 Zerner (2003, 215).
9 Bouvier (2005, 340–3).
10 Plogsterth (1991, 154). See also Reinach (1920, 169–72).
11 Plogsterth (1991, 154–8), identifies the original in the Louvre version, as she finds several other versions to be inferior in terms of technique and originality of design.
12 Bouvier (2005, 339–41; 357).
13 Reinach (1920, 171).
14 Plogsterth (1991, 156).
15 Reinach (1920, 170).
16 Fisher (1998), 254–5).
17 Plogsterth (1991, 159). Trinquet (1966, 14) argues that the inscriptions were later as well.
18 For the scandal in more detail, see Crawford (2003), and for the larger context of royal sexual politics, see Crawford (2010, 195–240). For Gabrielle d'Estrées' biography, see especially Ritter (1947) and Murat (1992). For Henri's biography, see for instance Buisseret (1984), Babelon (2009) and Pitts (2009).
19 Valois (1858, 173–80) reported that Henri had made such a promise to Françoise de Montmorency-Fosseux ('Fosseuse') in 1582. After Gabrielle died, Henri promised Henriette d'Entraigues that he would marry her if she gave him a son, but Henri's new wife, Marie de' Medici, beat her to it, giving birth to the future Louis XIII. On the kerfuffle around Henriette, see Henri IV (1843–76, vol. 5, 224–7) and Sully (1837, 320).
20 Desclozeaux (1886) and Murat (1992, 75–81).
21 Desclozeaux (1886, 76; 83).
22 For detailed discussion, see Féret (1876).

23 Lettres de legitimation de César de Vendôme, Paris, 4 janvier 1595, Manuscrits de l'Institut de France, Paris, MS Godefroy 304, fol. 70. Henri also formally recognized Gabrielle as tutrice of César during his minority, a procedural step usually only done in the event that a king was leaving the realm and/or his son was underage. For the order, see "Lettres patentes de Henri IV conférant la tutelle de César de Vendôme, pendant sa minorité, à sa mere Gabrielle d'Estrées," MS Godefroy 304, fol. 74.

24 L'Éstoile (1875–96, vol. 7, 122) and Sully (1837, 295–8).

25 L'Éstoile (1875–96, vol. 7, 99; 178–79). See also the satire directed at Henri in Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Français 23301, p. 143 ("Histoire de la dissolution de la mariage du roy Henry IV et de Marguerite de France, en 1599, avec les actes, pièces et mémoires servans de preuves, le tout recueilli par M. Jean Bouhier"; eighteenth century).

26 For a modern view, see Wellman (2013, 352). For the poisoning hypothesis and other speculation at the time, see Desclozeaux (1889, 236–66). Among the expressions of relief that Gabrielle died before Henri could marry her, see especially L'Éstoile (1875–96, vol. 7, 185–6) and Catherine de Bourbon to Henri IV (12 April 1599), printed in Henri IV (1988, 230–40).

27 Adhémar (1950, no. 23). Believing it to be the coronation ring, Adhémar dates the painting to 1599.

28 It was identified as a sapphire when the painting was sold in 1897. See *Catalogue des objets de curiosité et d'ameublement des XVIe, XVIIe, et XVIIIe siècles* (1897, no. 1340, 141).

29 Schefer (1969, 139; 141).

30 Crawford (2003, 232–6). See also Zerner (2003, 213–14).

31 Anon. (School of Fontainbleau), Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon. Reproduced and discussed in Chastel (1995, 233–4).

32 Du Laurens (1639, 392) discusses how testing the right nipple can indicate the conception of a male child. Originally published in Latin in 1600.

33 Lucie-Smith (1991, 72).

34 The painting has been called *Diane de Poitiers* by Chastel (1966, vol. 1, 97). The same painting is known as François Clouet (?), *Diane de Poitiers* (late sixteenth century), Château d'Azay-le-Rideau. There is another version of the same composition with some different details. See École de Fontainebleau, *Diane au bain*, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tours. The dating of the painting is disputed, and while it is commonly catalogued as dating to 1571, the possible range is anywhere from 1562 to the late 1590s. For a measured discussion of the possibilities, see John Oliver Hand's analysis in Conisbee *et al.* (2009, 115–22). Hand reasons that the servant is heating and hauling water for the bath; Conisbee *et al.* (2009, 117).

35 Chastel (1995, 232). Among the earliest precedents for Gabrielle are several Italian images of women bathing, including Piero di Cosimo, *Simonetta Vespucci (Cleopatra)* (*c.* 1500, Musée Condé, Chantilly) and Giorgione, Laura (*c.* 1506, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna). The shift that Cosimo and Giorgione represent is a more explicit blend of erotic fantasy within a longer tradition of nude or partially clothed images of women such as Venus Pudica or the Virgin Mary lactating.

36 Roulston (2006, 641).

37 For the complicated erotics and gender politics of the Appartement des Bains, see Waddington (1991, 112–17).

38 Zerner (2003, 221) points out that *bagno* (or *bagnio*) is still slang in Italy for brothel.

39 Kuperty-Tsur (2007, 126–7).

40 Baths were at least sometimes designed for several bathers. At the château of Genlis, the tub could hold four people easily. See Genlis (1825, vol. 1, 256). For bathing practices generally, see Reinach (1920, 173–4) and Duby and Braunstein (1988).

41 See Trinquet (1967, 15) for the discussion of "une reprise parodique," and 22 for the idea of a "succession à la volupté," dating the painting to 1599.

He reads Gabrielle as "mournful," arguing that the red tones refer to her death; the erotic
42 painting visible over the mantle refers to Henri IV. See Trinquet (1967, 19).
43 Trinquet (1967, 18–19). See also Reinach (1920, 170) and Dimier (1904, 189). Neither Reinach nor Dimier reads the image as Henriette with Gabrielle.
44 See for instance the engraving by Jérôme Wiérix, *Henriette de Balzac d'Entragues* (*c.* 1600, Musée national du château de Pau).
45 On lesbian invisibility, see for instance de Lauretis (1988).
46 Traub (2002). For additional evidence, see Andreadis (2001). Legault (2008) argues that female friendship, sometimes with intimations of sex, often garnered sympathy in seventeenth-century texts. This moves past the tendency to de-eroticize female–female relationships exemplified in Faderman (1981).
47 Fisher (1998, 265, note 12).
48 On portraits of sisters, see especially Mitchell (1997–8).
49 Roulston (2006, 642–3). Roulston draws on Wahl (1999).
50 The rise of the two-sex model is the subject of Laqueur (1990). Laqueur has been criticized for overstating his case, but the incommensurability of male and female had certainly gained strength by the eighteenth century.
51 Guth (2012).
52 Simons (2011) argues that penetration was less important in early modernity than projection, particularly of semen.
53 Guth (2012, 306–7). See also Fisher (1998, 257–9).
54 Brantôme (1864–82, vol. 9, 49–50). Brantôme, however, is a notoriously problematic source, not least because he wrote long after the events he reported.
55 For an especially cogent account of 'argumentum in utramque partem,' see Schiffman (1991); for such practices relative to gender in early modern France, see Warner (2011).

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